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Novellieri Italiani

MATTEO BANDELLO

Novellieri Italiani

MATTEO BANDELLO

TWELVE STORIES SELECTED
AND DONE INTO ENGLISH
WITH A MEMOIR OF THE
AUTHOR BY

PERCY PINKERTON

LONDON
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INTRODUCTION

MATTEO BANDELLO, who deserves to rank as the most important of the Italian *novellieri*, was born at Castelnuovo, in Tortona, Piedmont, towards the end of the fifteenth century. It was doubtless owing to the influence of his uncle, Vincenzio Bandello, General of the Dominicans, that he was led to choose the Church as a profession. While yet a boy, he visited Rome, where he joined the Order of the Predicatori, and in due course was sent to the famous convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie at Milan. His stay there, however, was brief, as he was soon called upon to accompany his uncle when in his official capacity he had to visit the various Dominican convents of France, Italy, Germany, and Spain. Travel thus brought the young monk into touch with the world, and so rare an opportunity, at this impressionable age, of studying men and manners

was not wasted; indeed it may have served to shape his taste for letters. Much of Bandello's early manhood was passed at Mantua, where he became the tutor and devoted admirer of the accomplished, bewitching Lucrezia Gonzaga. In Scaliger he also found another distinguished friend, and was upon familiar terms with all the most cultured, scholarly gentlemen of the time; for he could count the illustrious families of Visconti, Gonzaga, Da Este, and Sforza as his patrons and friends. Statesmen, and not only men of letters, recognised his ability, and several princes and courtiers entrusted him with important negotiations of a political nature. During this time he had excellent opportunities to collect and arrange materials for his famous series of novels, the suggestion to compose these having been made to him by Ippolita Sforza-Bentivoglio—one of the first and most constant of his patrons.

But his literary work was grievously interrupted when, in 1525, the Spaniards routed the French and took possession of Milan. As a partisan of France, Bandello's father was condemned to exile, his goods being confiscated and his house destroyed. Matteo himself was obliged to escape, leaving all his papers

and manuscripts behind. After various vicissitudes, he accepted the offer of Cesare Fregoso and his wife, Costanza Rangoni, to accompany them to France, since in Italy he could find no permanent home. Fregoso, at one time a distinguished Venetian general, had espoused the French cause, and possessed a beautiful *château* at Bassen, near Agen, in Aquitaine. Here with these friends Bandello remained, living, as he himself tells us, "tranquilly for the muses and for himself." Through the influence of friends, some of his manuscripts were eventually recovered from the Spaniards, and he now spent this period of leisure in revising and re-writing his stories with a view to their publication.

In 1541 Bandello lost his patron, for Fregoso, who had gone to Venice as ambassador of Francis I., was assassinated at Milan, by order of the Governor, the Marchese del Vasto. However, for this misfortune Matteo had a recompense when nine years later Henry II. made him Bishop of Agen, as an acknowledgment of his allegiance to France during the Italian wars. Bandello, nevertheless, exercised his Episcopal functions as little as possible, leaving the government of his diocese to a

deputy, Giovanni Valerio, Bishop of Grasse, while enjoying to the full the pecuniary and social advantages of his new position. Being thoroughly worldly by nature, he preferred to remain to the last a citizen of the world, a literary courtier for whom the austere seclusion of the cloister had no charm.

The date of his death is uncertain. The first set of his novels, in three parts, appeared at Lucca in 1554. He had originally intended the renowned Aldus to bring them out, but the printer's death prevented this. In 1573 the fourth part of his novels was published, this time at Lyons, as the Lucca edition had caused no small outcry in Italy. This final instalment may have appeared after his death, which certainly did not occur until 1561, if not later. In this fourth part Bandello prints the tale of Simone Turchi, which his kinsfolk in Lucca had suppressed, when it was intended to include it in the 1554 edition. Indeed there is no doubt that many of the stories, all founded, as their author delights to inform us, upon actual facts, gave grievous offence to many Italian families of rank, who could read between the lines and identify the actors in many a romance of passion and treachery, bloodshed and revenge; and, but for the fact that he remained on

alien soil and sheltered by the Church, the novelist's boldness might have been punished with tragic speed. The meagre details of his life leave us at least with the conviction that Bandello was a man of scholarly attainments. We know that he produced a version of the Hecuba of Euripides, that he made several translations from the Latin, and that he had amassed materials for the construction of an important Latin dictionary, which were among the manuscripts lost when the Spaniards sacked Milan. He also wrote love-sonnets and *canti* in *ottava rima* to his patroness, Lucrezia Gonzaga. But these counted only as interludes, as trifles by the way. It was by his novels that he determined to achieve a reputation, and with unfailing diligence and zeal he made them the serious business of his life.

The interest roused by the *Decamerone* and by Masuccio's tales may have encouraged Bandello to win success in the same field. The *novella* was the fashionable pastime of the moment, and Bandello sought to make his collection of tales remarkable for their vividness and force. Above all he desired to base them upon actual fact. "These novels of mine," he says, "are not fables, but true histories." From Masuccio he doubtless took the idea of dedi-

cating each tale to some illustrious friend, prefacing this by an elaborately-written prologue. These dedications have their value as showing the reasons which led to the writing of this or that story. But in the present short selection we have preferred to omit them, and let the tales speak for themselves.

Derived as it was from the French *fabliau*, at that epoch for Italians of all classes the *novella* possessed absorbing attraction. When Bandello came forward to contribute to the entertainment of his countrymen he brought them a set of tales surprisingly varied in detail and in interest, full of human nature, and touched with the reckless buoyant spirit of the time. Their appeal was immediate and extensive. By their spontaneous simplicity and vigour they reached a larger public than Boccaccio had been able to allure by his florid, more delicately finished work. But then the Tuscan intended his *Decamerone* to belong to literature; and to literature Bandello avowedly gave little heed. His main intention was to be popular and to amuse. Rhetoric and the graces of style he eschews, being only eager to get to his incidents and to marshal these in such a manner as to hold the reader's attention to the last. To point a moral was still

less a part of his design; entertainment was all. Certainly, as a story-teller, as a cunning narrator who has absolutely mastered the mechanism of his craft, Bandello stands with the very first. If at times extravagant and verbose, he never disregards the architecture of the tale that he is narrating, but presents the incidents rapidly and with a picturesque vehemence that often lights imagination and not infrequently transports.

It has been said that he copied Boccaccio. His reverence for that writer's grace of form was indeed so deep that he took the pains to translate one of the *Decamerone* tales into Latin, while appropriating from this work many ornate expressions and melodious turns of phrase which had caught his fancy. But if somewhat clumsily he imitated Boccaccio's manner, the method of Bandello was essentially his own. He is far more direct. He relates his facts with greater brevity and speed, with a vigour and breadth of expression more impressive, more convincing in the main than a recital which depends upon the elaborate adjustment of words for its effect. The scholar may dislike his rugged, careless, impetuous Lombard style, but the student of manners, the humanist

must admit that as a *raconteur* Bandello knew his business thoroughly, and that he performed it with quite conspicuous skill.

It is remarkable that, while all, or nearly all, his tales contain the germs of drama, being tragedies and comedies in brief, Bandello should himself have no dramatic sense. With something of the frank unconsciousness of a child he handles his vast materials dexterously, almost jocularly, yet with no clear perception of their deep tragic and spiritual significance. The tale for him is just a tale, to move, to divert one for the moment; a succession of merry, romantic, or grievous events, not the appalling picture of the warfare and the shipwreck of souls. He is at no pains to bring us into touch with his characters, to breathe upon the dry bones and make them live. A poet, a psychologist, even within the narrow space of a *novella*, would assuredly have done this. Bandello was neither. He could not give the touch that transfigures. He was merely a fluent, adroit tale-teller, with a power of graphic description that, were he among us to-day, would presently have made him the *enfant gâté* of the Fleet Street press. At this point he certainly touches our century. To use a slang phrase, just

for its very expressiveness, he was so tremendously "up to date." Indeed, if journalism be to seize the topic of the hour and give it to the world in a fresh, attractive guise, then we may almost style Bandello a triumphant journalist of the Renascence, with a keen eye for gossip of all sorts, and an infallible instinct for the materials from which good "copy" may be spun.

An interesting sign of Bandello's effort to draw character may be found in the *Don Diego* story, where the stubborn Ginevra fills the whole canvas and controls the entire action of the tale, until her amazing obstinacy disappears at the sudden perception of her despondent lover's unswerving fidelity. But this is a solitary instance. In most of the stories the characters are shadowy, pulseless figures, without magnetism, without life.

In the treatment of purely romantic themes, such as the delightful story of Gerardo and Elena, which we unhesitatingly include in this selection, Bandello's power and ability are best displayed. As an enchanting series of pictures of old Venice, vivid and brilliant in colouring as any by Carpaccio, it exhibits all the novelist's excellences, while it has few or none of his faults. Another tale that deserves un-

stinted praise is the account of Cornelio and of his tragi-comic adventures in Milan. As a faithful study of contemporary life, we are bound to value it, apart from its absolute naturalness and humour, which bring it to the level of the best. At its side may be set the story of the hapless Veronese lovers, which the bright genius of Shakespeare was afterwards to make immortal.

Shakespeare probably found it in the garbled French version of Bandello's tales, published in 1559 by Boaistuau and his collaborator, De Belleforest, which had then a great vogue, and went through several successive editions. If these worthies may be said to have popularised Bandello, as translators they certainly proved themselves traitors, altering the stories, substituting climaxes and situations of their own invention, while showing a most sublime disregard for the author's text. In fact, their book was not a translation, but a somewhat pretentious paraphrase. From this, however, Shakespeare took the theme of his noble tragedy, missing, in common with his French guides, the supreme pathos of the lovers' death scene as given by Da Porto and by Bandello. Bandello makes Romeo drink the poison before he rouses Giulietta from her trance, and in

the first ecstacy of their meeting, he for a time forgets that death must soon take him. For the dramatist, this surely was a sublime catastrophe; had it been suggested to Shakespeare, he would have given us a death scene infinitely more touching than the one in his play. For in that, Romeo dies before Juliet wakes; and so we lose the moving spectacle of their rapturous meeting and their pitiful farewell. Bandello, for all his want of insight, recognised the overwhelming effect of this climax, and his account in its simplicity and directness cannot be matched. Though Da Porto used the incidents, Bandello really told the Romeo and Juliet story for the first time, clearly and fully, so that the tale may be said to belong to him: certainly no one has treated it with greater success.

Unlike Cintio, who in his *Eccatommiti*, by grouping his tales gave them a certain ethical significance, Bandello cares nothing for method, for classification, but permits a story unspeakably gross in motive and treatment to follow close upon one replete with tenderness and beauty. Yet a survey of his work will soon show us that in effect the two hundred odd tales separate themselves rather sharply into groups. There are the purely tragic stories which

appealed to Boaistuau and De Belleforest. These preponderate; and we have sought to give striking examples of them in *Violante* and *Simone Turchi.* There are the suavely romantic tales represented here by *Gerardo and Elena*, *Don Diego*, and *Romeo and Giulietta.* There are love-tales brightened by occasional episodes of an amusing sort, such as *Cornelio*, *Pandolfo*, and the *Judge of Lucca;* and then of course we have the humorous stories at the expense of the clergy, of which the *Avaricious Priest*, *Bigolino*, and *The Donkey and the Prior* constitute fair samples. Finally there are the gross tales, which, for various reasons, we have preferred to ignore. For the humour of Bandello, the humour untouched by obscenity, we cannot find much praise. It is usually of such a blunt, crude sort, so wanting in subtlety, in suggestiveness. Strange indeed is it that the polished people of the Renascence, with their fine keen sense, should have been readily satisfied with such thin, feeble fun, and should never have tired of the eternal mockery of the eternal friar, nor of the ruthless baiting of the greedy bishop. Bandello assuredly gave them of such stuff good measure, pressed down indeed, and running over.

The charge of coarseness which, as a writer, Bandello cannot escape, needs happily in the present instance neither substantiation nor excuse, for of this we have provided no sample. But, in passing, we may note that gross stories were the fashion, and that a popular novel-monger was obliged to give the public that for which it always craved. To-day, we profess to be infinitely appalled by Bandello's obscenity, just as his contemporaries seemed horror-struck that a bishop, robed in ecclesiastical purple and in touch with courts, should deliberately seek to cover his Church with shame, by printing infamous tales about the priests. Yet in our virtuous disdain let us remember that, if Bandello sinned, it was solely in his desire to amuse. *Tout pour soullas* might well have served him for motto. Herein, again, he emphasises the force of our *fin-de-siècle* law, which, in the effort to entertain, permits us to shock or to scandalise society, but absolutely forbids us to be dull. To this rule our reverend prelate blandly conforms.

In conclusion, we must admit that Bandello's work is valuable to us as a specimen of the literature which found wide favour with all classes in Italy at the time of the Renascence. It reflects the whole

of Italian society, and gives us surprisingly truthful, vivid pictures of its manners and its life. Nor by any one of his contemporaries has the sheer craft of story-telling been more convincingly shown than by the worldly, pleasure-loving, genial bishop to whom Leandro Alberti refers as *virum in scribendo, floridum, clarum, nitidum, emunctum et accuratum.* A flattering verdict, which, however, on the whole we need not reverse.

PERCY PINKERTON.

August, 1894.

HOW Don Diego, being scorned by his mistress, takes up his abode in a grotto, and how he comes out again.

NOT many years ago, in Spain, near the Pyrenees, there lived a lady at her castle there, the widow of a knight of most noble birth, and a native of those parts. They had an only daughter of great beauty, whom they brought up with the utmost care. Ginevra the Fair was the name by which all knew her, her hair being so fair that it seemed like shining threads of burnished gold. About half a day's journey from Ginevra's home there was another castle, the property of a young knight. He also had no father, and for long past his mother had caused him to live at Barcelona to study letters, as well as the habits and ways of a well-bred gentleman. He soon acquired polished manners and a graceful bearing, and, besides letters, he gave himself up to arms, to such

purpose that among all the young knights of Barcelona he had few peers.

A grand tournament was about to be held at Barcelona in honour of King Philip of Austria, who, passing through France, was on his way to Catalonia to take possession of his Spanish dominions. For this tournament certain young men were chosen, one of the chief of these being Don Diego, of whom we now speak. Accordingly he sent a message to his mother, asking her to furnish him with all things necessary for the joust, so that at this festival he might show himself with all due honour. The mother, who was a discreet woman, and to whom her son was as the apple of her eye, sent him money in abundance and a proper retinue of servants, telling him to spare nothing that might do him honour. So he provided himself in due course with such horses and arms as he needed, and exercised himself every day under the guidance of a first-rate jouster.

King Philip came, and was received by the Barcelonese with all due honour. In fact, they showed him all possible loyalty, he being the son-in-law of Ferdinand, King Catholic, who, on

the death of Queen Isabella, had sailed for Naples, and at whose decease King Philip would inherit all. The tournament was held, the jousters being without exception youths of the highest nobility, who had never yet borne arms. The honours of the joust fell to Don Diego, and King Philip, seeing he was a youth of about nineteen, knighted him, and in the presence of all the citizens gave him great praise, exhorting him to persevere from good to better.

Upon the king's departure for Castille, Don Diego, desiring to visit his mother, whom for a long time he had not seen, made the necessary arrangements in Barcelona, and then set out for his castle. His mother gave him loving welcome, and he spent all his time in hunting stags and wild boars, of which the country was full, at times making excursions to the mountains, whence he brought back a bear or two.

One day it happened that, having started his dogs in pursuit of certain deer, and following them up himself, he came upon several stags in a thicket, one of which leaped out into the open, and ran off in front of him. Seeing this, he left off chasing the deer, and, telling his men to follow him, he

gave reins to his horse, and hotly pursued the new game. Four of his huntsmen, being well mounted, followed their master, but they could not keep up with him for long, for the jennet he rode was very fleet of foot. They soon lost sight of him, and he got far ahead. After a time, however, his horse began to lose wind, while the stag flew ever faster, and gained upon him, at which he was greatly discontented. There being none of his men near, he blew a loud blast on his horn to summon them; but, as he was so far ahead, they could not hear, and, getting no reply to his signal, he slowly turned back. Not being familiar with the country in those parts he lost his way, and, thinking he was making for home, he rode towards the castle of Ginevra the Fair, who, with her mother and their vassals, had gone out to hunt the hare and were coming towards the knight. Don Diego, hearing the outcry made by Ginevra's party, rode to where the sound came from, and, as it seemed to him that none of the hunters were his men, he was at a loss what to do.

It was now near evening, and the sun as it sank made all the shadows larger. Don Diego, aware that his horse could hardly budge, set himself to

follow the noise he heard, not wishing to remain alone in the open country. Going a little farther, he saw a most beautiful castle not more than a mile distant, and, near at hand, a party of men and women who had just killed a hare. He thought that this must be the lady of the castle with her retainers. Ginevra's mother noticed the knight, whose dress and steed proclaimed him to be a person of quality. She saw that his horse was overcome with fatigue and could hardly move, so she sent a servant to ask who he was. Hearing his name, she came forward to meet him, and gave him courteous welcome, expressing her pleasure at seeing him, not only on account of the good reports she had heard of him and of his merit, but also for the sake of his mother, who was her neighbour and very good friend.

Evening had come, so she invited him to stay the night at the castle, sending a messenger at once to inform his mother, who, at not seeing him return, might be uneasy. Kissing the hands of the lady and her daughter, Don Diego gave them many thanks for their courtesy, and accepted the invitation. They thus went on together towards the castle, another horse being

found for Don Diego, whose jennet they caused to be led, for it was sorely out of breath. They talked of various things on the way, and it happened that Don Diego, a very comely and charming youth, raising his eyes, met those of Ginevra as she was about to look fixedly at him. In these mutual glances there was such fire and force that both fell straightway in love, each as it were becoming the other's captive. Don Diego gazed in rapture upon the beauteous damsel, who may have been from sixteen to seventeen years old, and was riding a velvet-housed palfrey with great ease and grace. She wore a curiously made cap with plumes, that hid part of her hair, while the rest curled about her face in two wavy tresses, which seemed to say, "Here and here only have love and the graces made themselves a nest of their own." From her dainty ears there hung two jewels of quaint workmanship, and in each was a precious Orient pearl. In the centre of her broad white brow, a lustrous diamond, set in gold, glittered, just as in the calm firmament the fair stars gleam. The splendour of her eyes well-nigh turned those who beheld them to living fire, blinding the gazer, as if he had sought to

look upon the June-tide sun as it flames at noon in a cloudless sky. It was with these that she could deal death to every one, or, if she willed it, make the dying live. The little nose that matched so sweet a face parted her cheeks of delicate pink and white that seemed like two rosy apples. The lips of her little mouth were like rare and shining coral, that, when she spoke or smiled, revealed rows of Orient pearls, and her speech was of such harmony and sweetness that it must have touched the hardest heart to tenderness. But how shall I speak of the beauty of her chin, or describe her ivory throat, and marble shoulders, and alabaster breast? I must e'en refrain from telling of her slender arms and beauteous hands, which, when she drew off her perfumed gloves, were seen to be shapely, white, and soft. Her way was not the way of many women who seem sad and melancholy, so that they may appear virtuous, but in manner she was bright and gay, though modest and courteous withal. A curiously wrought gold chain encircled her white neck, hanging down on her breast. Her vest was of soft white stuff, quaintly slashed, and beneath it shone a robe of cloth of gold.

As thus they went forward to the castle, Don Diego rode on Ginevra's right, according to the custom of the country, and, holding her bridle, talked with her of various things. When they came to the castle, the mother desired her guest to rest himself for a time, and he was taken to a richly furnished chamber, where his riding-boots were drawn off. He had little inclination to rest; nevertheless, to please his hostess, he took off his hunting dress and put on rich apparel, with which she provided him, thinking all the while of Ginevra's divine beauty, a beauty such as, it seemed to him, he had never before seen. Ginevra on her part could not put the young knight out of her thoughts, and in the brief sight of him which she had had he seemed the handsomest, most accomplished and charming youth she had ever met. To think of him gave her a new and marvellous joy; and finally, though unaware of it, she fell passionately in love with him. He, on his part, thought of her in like fashion, and all unconsciously drank in the amorous poison, concluding that, whereas he had gone out to kill a stag, he had himself been mortally wounded with love's arrow by Ginevra the Fair.

In the meantime, Don Diego's men, after looking for him a long while in vain, had gone home, believing that he had returned by another way. When they got within half-a-mile of the castle, they met the messenger who had come to tell Don Diego's mother not to expect him that evening. As it was now two hours after sunset, the mother, when she knew that her son was so comfortably lodged, would not let others go to him there for the time being.

The lovers had not had long to stay in each other's thoughts before supper was set ready in a banqueting-room whither the knight was brought. Here he was graciously welcomed by the mother and her daughter, who entertained him with pleasant talk. Water was brought, and at the lady's request they washed hands, Don Diego, in spite of himself, being obliged to sit at the head of the table. His hostess sat on the right, and Ginevra on his left hand, the others being placed in succession according to their rank. The board abounded in rare and delicate meats, albeit the two lovers could eat little. The hostess caused various wines of great price to be drawn, though neither she nor her daughter drank wine. It so happened

that Don Diego had never tasted wine, being thus accustomed ever since his childhood, so that they all three drank water. But I, my lord, if I had been there, I should have done as the others did, who all drank wine. For, as I take it, all the foods in the world are insipid without wine, and, in truth, the better the wine, the greater the relish it gives meats.

The hostess, who was a good talker, led the knight to converse upon various subjects, while begging him to do justice to her hospitality, and thus passing from one topic to another, Ginevra also at length took part in the discourse, which made her lover think himself in Paradise. Thus the supper passed off very pleasantly with good cheer and merry talk, and after it was over Don Diego spoke for a good while with Ginevra, though he dared not reveal his fervent love for her, beyond declaring himself her servant, and avowing that he would be proud to do her behests. With countless blushes the girl modestly thanked him for his offers of service, and while she was sensible that by his acts and speech he showed a more than common affection for her, she did not let him see this, so that hereafter she might the better

observe his real feelings. When sleeping time had come, they gave each other the customary good night and retired to rest. What dreams the lovers had may easily be imagined by those who have ever found themselves in such a labyrinth. Sleep they could not, but all night long they were a prey to their thoughts; now hopeful, and now full of fear; first reproving themselves, and anon taking courage to pursue their enterprise. Ginevra seemed to have detected something, she knew not what, in the knight which told her that he loved her, and that, if she gave him her love, it would not be given in vain: it was this consciousness that seemed to add fuel to the flame. Don Diego, who found the damsel discreet, and of rare beauty and grace, felt in every part of him such ardent affection that, despite himself, he was forced to love her. Yet if he showed this love and it was unreturned, what then? She was but a girl, with all a girl's modesty, not prone to give too much heed to the compliments paid her by young men. Still he took comfort in the hope that by faithful service he might win her. Such were the thoughts that teased the lovers all that night.

When day came, Don Diego's retainers arrived

to accompany him to his home. The lady of the castle had already risen, and did not wish the knight to depart in the morning, having ordered the midday repast to be served speedily and with due honour. Don Diego easily let himself be persuaded to stay, for he hoped to have another sight of Ginevra the Fair, who, the better to please her lover, had attired herself most richly that morning, and yet with such coquetry that everything about her seemed smiling and gay. Many a time she looked in her mirror and consulted her waiting-women, lest aught in her dress should cause comment, and then she went down into a garden where her mother and the young knight were walking. When Don Diego saw the damsel, he respectfully saluted her, gazing fixedly upon her; and, if yesterday he had thought her most fair, it now seemed to him that in her all the beauty that could be desired in woman, or of which poets had sung, was summed up and perfected. For this reason he could not take his eyes off her. In the same way Don Diego seemed to her the comeliest and most charming youth that might be found, and thus looking lovingly at each other, they fed their eyes with the sweet sight.

After hearing mass in the castle chapel, they went to dinner, and the meal being over, Don Diego's servants brought round the horses. The knight gave his hostess such thanks as best he might, kissing her hands, and declaring himself ever ready to serve her. Turning to Ginevra the Fair, he humbly kissed her hands also, being fain to say I know not what to her; but his great love so overcame him, that he could not utter a word, nor yet release her dainty little hand. To Ginevra this was a sure sign that the knight loved her deeply, and she felt within her a supreme content, as with trembling voice she said, "Signor Don Diego, I am all yours." Then, taking leave of all, the knight mounted his horse, and with his retainers rode back to his mother, telling her of the gracious welcome and the great honour with which he had been received.

Now, between the two widows there was a friendship of long standing. They often exchanged visits and ate at each other's house. Learning this from his mother, Don Diego gave orders for a festival, to which Ginevra and her mother were bidden. Music, adornment, and the presence of fair and noble ladies made the entertainment most

beautiful and pleasant. The knight danced several times with Ginevra the Fair, and little by little grew more familiar with her. Whereupon with fitting words he began to show her his love, and all the passion which for her sake he suffered. Though fain to appear coy, she could not succeed, and her failure herein made it easy for him to see that she burned with love no less than did he. After the dance, games were played, the knight doing everything he could to please his guests, showing all possible honour to Ginevra and her mother.

While endeavouring to assuage the amorous fires that burned within them, the two lovers did but quicken these, both drinking by mutual glances of love's poison.

Thus the young man continued his attentions, going often to the damsel's house, while inviting her to his. When the two mothers got to know of their love, they were nowise displeased, for the knight's mother was ready enough to receive Ginevra as her daughter-in-law, while the other widow no less willingly would have taken Don Diego as a son-in-law. Yet, as it often chances that a thousand good schemes are spoilt by the

scruples which some people have, so it came about that neither wished to be the first to make a move in the matter.

Near these castles there lived a wealthy knight, Don Diego's great friend, and the young man was often on the point of telling him about his love and of asking his advice, but he refrained through fear of offending his beloved. The intimacy between the lovers had become so close that Don Diego went to Ginevra's home almost every day, staying there for three or four hours, and often supping there, so that every one could plainly perceive that they were in love. They desired nothing better than to be joined by the bond of marriage, yet Ginevra durst not reveal her wish to her mother, while Don Diego said nothing to his. The parents, for their part, thought them both very young, and that there was time enough before they need get married, so they passed over the matter without saying anything, though pleased at the intimacy which existed.

While matters stood thus, it happened that a very beautiful damsel, the daughter of a gentle-

man of that country, and who frequently visited Ginevra's house, fell passionately in love with Don Diego, and tried her hardest to make him love her. But the knight had surrendered his whole heart to Ginevra the Fair, and to this damsel's doings he gave never a thought. She became possessed of a most perfect hawk, and, knowing how much Don Diego delighted in birds of prey, she sent it to him as a gift. Thinking little more about it, the knight accepted the present, and, giving the bearer a pair of hose, he sent a thousand thanks to the damsel, together with his offers of service. It was then the season for hawking at partridges, and as the bird in question was of the best sort to be found, small wonder if he prized it dear. He had twice sent partridges as a present to Ginevra, and one day, when going to visit her, he carried the hawk on his wrist, speaking of its excellence, and avowing that he valued it as his very eyes. As already said, the love of these two was well known to all, and one day, at Ginevra's house and in her presence, the talk turned upon Don Diego, and he was praised by all as a gallant and accomplished knight. Hereupon a certain Signor Graziano re-

marked that Don Diego, true enough, was a brave fellow, but that he was like the crock-seller's donkey, which shoves its head through every door. Ginevra wondered much at this speech, and begged Graziano to make his meaning plain to her. Thinking himself a man of great wisdom, he said, "Lady, the potters who go about with asses from village to village, selling pots, sauce-pans, and earthenware vessels, stop at every door; and our friend Don Diego does the same. He makes love to all the girls he sees; and just now he is passionately enamoured of Don Ferrando della Serra's daughter, from whom he has got a hawk which he prizes more than his very life." I know not if the dolt said these words of his own accord, or if he was set on by others to say them; I only know that they brought about great mischief, as you shall see anon.

When Ginevra heard this speech, she left the company and went to her room, where she gave vent to such jealous rage that she nearly went mad. So much indeed did the thing anger her, that her love for Don Diego turned to cruel hatred, though she never reflected that he who said this might have been moved to do it by

others, or that envy and malice had made him speak thus.

Soon afterwards the knight came as usual to visit Ginevra, who, hearing that he had dismounted in the courtyard, withdrew to her chamber and barred the door. Entering the hall, Don Diego spoke for a good while with the girl's mother, carrying at his wrist the identical hawk, and telling of the marvellous things which it had done. Then, seeing that Ginevra did not show herself as was her wont, he inquired for her, and was told that upon his arrival she had retired to her room, whereat he said nothing further. At the proper moment he took his leave of the lady and departed. Going down the staircase, he met one of Ginevra's serving-women, and bade her in his name kiss the hands of her mistress. The woman knew of their loves, and, ignorant of Ginevra's anger about the hawk, delivered his message. Ginevra had already heard how he had come with the bird at his wrist, and of the wonderful praises he had bestowed upon it. For certain, he had done this, she thought, to slight her. Moreover, as she firmly believed that he was paying court to the other damsel, she deemed herself

mocked and scorned by him, and the idea took such hold of her that nothing in the world might suffice to put it out of her head. Just then the serving-woman came in, bringing the knight's message of greeting, which the more enraged her, so that she exclaimed, "Ah, disloyal lover and rash! After playing me false and leaving me for some one in no wise my equal, you even dare to come to my house and send to kiss my hands the more to spite me! But by God's faith I will mete out to you the honour that you deserve!" Whereupon she told the waiting-woman all about the hawk, and how Don Diego was paying his court to Signor Ferrando's daughter.

Hearing all these fables and deeming them true, the chamber-maid greatly commended her mistress for her proposal, thus adding fuel to the fire. The wench herself loved one of the young men of the house, who, for what cause I know not, had a great spite against Don Diego, and was exceedingly vexed that he was to take Ginevra the Fair to wife. This man, when he knew of Ginevra's anger, pretended to have heard on good authority that, but for respect towards his mother, Don Diego would already have espoused the damsel of the hawk,

and he made the chamber-woman tell her mistress this new tale, which she was all too prone to believe.

Having determined to break off this intimacy, and to prevent Don Diego from coming any more, she summoned a page and strictly bade him take his stand on the following day at a certain place outside the castle, where he needs must meet Don Diego; and when he came up, he was to say, "Ginevra the Fair sends me to you, and by me bids you get gone to the place whence comes your darling hawk, for here you shall no longer take partridges nor quails."

The page went in due time to the place fixed, and stayed there until Don Diego came past as usual, when he delivered his message, as commanded. Being of a shrewd wit, the knight right well understood its import, and without going further he turned homewards in great dejection. Repairing to his chamber forthwith, he wrote such a letter as seemed necessary to him, and then, taking the hawk, he killed it, and sent it, together with the letter, to Ginevra by mounted messenger. When the man came before her, Ginevra would accept neither hawk nor letter, merely replying

by word of mouth as follows: "My good man, tell your master never to come before me again, for his manner of dealing is now quite clear to me; and I heartily thank God that I have become aware betimes of his scanty faith."

The messenger duly returned to Don Diego with this cruel message, and his grief and dismay can scarcely be described. Bewailing his misfortune, he tried a thousand ways to undeceive Ginevra, and to make her see that she had been misled by malicious tongues. But all was in vain; she would not let herself be appeased, nor lend an ear to her true lover's excuses and explanations; for so firmly had she riveted this false opinion in her heart, that to uproot it was impossible. Thus, neither letters nor messages would she accept at his hands.

Seeing himself thus treated through no fault of his own, and being unable to endure such grief, the luckless lover, when he could nowise abate the ardour of his affection, fell into such a melancholy state that he was like to die of it. It was easy to see what ailed him, now that he no longer enjoyed his lady's company, as he

was used; and the two mothers laughed at this, deeming it childish frowardness.

When he saw that he had vainly essayed all remedies which might have been of profit to him, and holding life in contempt, yet loth to die by his own hand, Don Diego resolved to try another way, viz., to go far away from the cause of his grief, and to wander hither and thither, hoping thus to abate his bitter sorrow. Having made this dire resolve, he ordered all things to be got ready which he thought he should need to bring away with him, and caused hermits' dresses to be made for himself and a companion, whom he intended to take with him wherever he went. He also wrote a letter, which he gave to one of his henchmen, and said, "I am going abroad on business of my own, and I do not wish my mother nor any one else to know where I go. Therefore, when I have departed, tell my lady mother, if she ask for me, that you do not know, but that I said I should come back within twenty days. Four days after my departure, and not before, you are to take this letter that I here give you to Ginevra the Fair; and, if she refuse to accept it, then give it to her mother. See

to it, as you value your life, that you do not disobey this command."

The man bade his master have no fear, but that all should be done as he ordered; and Don Diego then summoned his most trusted servant, a man of worth, and versed in worldly matters. To him he opened his whole heart as to that which he was minded to do. The honest fellow greatly condemned his unreasonable resolve, and by sound arguments strove to dissuade him from such whim; but he did not succeed, for Don Diego had resolved to do this. Being aware of such resolve, the loyal and loving servant thought to make the evil a lesser one by accompanying his master, and that with time he might manage to drive this fancy out of his head. By always stopping with him, he might also guard him from a yet more evil mischance. Accordingly, he declared that he would go with his master and never abandon him. Being thus agreed, and when all was in readiness, Don Diego mounted a jennet marvellously fleet of foot, the servant riding a sturdy cob, and carrying the saddle-bags. It was about three hours after sunset when they started, and they rode on lustily until daybreak,

when they journeyed by cross roads and unfrequented paths, so as to be seen by no one. Thus they fared forward until it was nearly noon, and, the month being September, the weather was not too hot.

Being now a long way from his home, the knight thought that they might safely refresh their horses; so accordingly they went to a little village standing aloof from the main roads, where they bought what was necessary for themselves and their steeds, giving them a three hours' rest. Then remounting, they journeyed on in this way for three days, until they came to the foot of a high mountain many miles distant from the main road. It was a wild solitary country, with trees of divers kinds, and abounding in hares, rabbits, and other wild creatures. There was also a large grotto, spacious enough to hold many people, whence issued a clear cool spring. When the knight saw this place, it pleased him exceedingly, and he said to his servant, "My brother, I would have this for my abode, so long as my brief life shall last." Whereupon they dismounted, and having removed the bridles and saddles from the horses they let them stray at will, nor did they

ever hear aught of them again, for as the beasts wandered away from the grotto in search of pasture, wolves may have devoured them. The saddles, bridles, and other trappings were placed in a corner of the cave; and taking off their usual dress, the knight and his servant put on hermits' clothes. The grotto was very spacious, hollowed out of the rock, and they closed the mouth of it with logs and branches, so that no beast of prey might enter it. Then, as well as they could they made two couches for themselves of beech-leaves, and remained in the cave for many days, subsisting upon the flesh of wild beasts, which the servant shot with a cross-bow that he had with him. The roots of herbs, wild berries, acorns, and the like were also their food, and they slaked their thirst with the water of the spring, which, as the knight did not drink wine, was no great annoyance.

Thus did Don Diego lead this squalid life in the woods, ever bemoaning the harshness and cruelty of his mistress, roaming all day about the rocks like a wild beast, and, it may be, searching for some bear that should take his life. The servant did all that he could to catch game, and

when the moment seemed to him a fitting one he would exhort his master to quit this bestial life and return home, and treat Ginevra as the fool that she was, who knew not her own weal, and did not deserve to have the love of so noble and rich a knight.

But when he began this talk, Don Diego could not bear to hear ill spoken of Ginevra, and with tears and sighs he ordered the servant to discourse of other matters. Before long he lost his natural colour, and became lean and haggard, so that he looked more like a wild man than anything else. His brown garment with its cowl, his unkempt locks and beard, and his sunken eyes had all so changed him, that of his former fashion naught remained.

Don Diego's mother, not seeing her son at dinner, sent to inquire for him, when the servant told her that he had gone out riding with one attendant, saying that he should return in twenty days. Hearing this, his good mother was reassured. Four days having gone by since the knight's departure, the serving-man carried the letter as commanded to Ginevra the Fair. He chanced to find her with her mother in the banqueting-hall, when with a proper obeisance he put the letter into her

hand. Perceiving it to be from Don Diego, she flung it on the floor, and changing colour said in a great rage, "I have already made him understand that I want none of his letters nor his messages!" The mother laughingly exclaimed, "This is forsooth a fine fit of anger; give me the letter and I will read it." Opening it, she read as follows:—

"Since, lady mine, my innocence has no place in your thoughts, and cannot impress aught of its true arguments upon your heart; since, too, by the plainest of signs I see that I am irksome to you, nay, even that you mortally hate me; and, as I cannot bear to be to you in the smallest thing a cause of displeasure, I have resolved to get me gone far hence from these parts, where neither you nor others shall have news of me; and thus, though I abide in misfortune, you shall at least live on in content. It is of all torments the hardest and most grievous to see myself thus disdained by you, but a far greater torment it is to know that through me or any deed of mine (though well done) you are angered or led to bear me ill-will; for my every torment is far less than the anguish engendered by one single touch of

your scorn. Since, then, my frail life may not long bear those bitter tortures that I now incessantly endure, ere it cease (which will soon be), I have chosen to state, in this my last letter, the simple truth of my case, not to bring reproach upon you, but as a testimony of my innocence; and, as I would not live in your disfavour, the world may at least know that I love, have loved, and shall eternally love you as much as any woman may be loved by any man, having a steadfast hope that, when I am dead, you will, though all too late, have pity for me, for that, at the last, you will know that I neither did, nor thought to do, anything that might reasonably vex you. I loved you, as you know, not that I might rob you of your virgin honour, but to have you, if you were so pleased, for my wife; and of this there is no better witness than yourself. As, now, you have shown no anger against me, except on account of the hawk which was lately given to me, I here tell you that this bird was sent to me as a present by Isabella, daughter of Signor Ferrando; and not to accept it, as it seemed to me, would have been a great discourtesy, since such gifts are usual among gentlefolk; but with Isabella I have never

spoken, except at your house and in your presence. Whether she loved me in the way you have imagined, I know not, since she never spoke of this to me; and, had she done so, it must have been clear to her that I had but one heart, which was no longer mine to bestow, for this was already made over to you as an irrevocable gift. As now she knows that in deference to you I killed her hawk, giving it as food for the dogs, I think she must be sure that I love her not a jot; this also should serve to acquaint you with my innocence. But a dark thick cloud of cruel and unjust disdain has so veiled and blinded your eyes, that it will not let you see the truth; nor can I give you other proof of my innocence than my heart, which is in your keeping. Let it, then, be thus, since thus it pleases you. You hating me, I can but hate myself; and, as my death will please you, I am fain to die. One thing alone grieves me, that I, being innocent, the blame must needs light on you. My death shall be but as the briefest of brief sighs, while your cruelty towards me will remain for ever before your eyes. I pray God He make you as happy as you would have me sad. May God be with you."

Having read this letter, the lady was greatly amazed, and sorely chid her daughter for having brought so noble and gentle a knight to such straits, scolding her not a little. But Ginevra was so greatly enraged and harboured such hatred for her lover that, at the news of his tribulation, she seemed to rejoice. Then the lady called Don Diego's servant, and asked him how long it was since his master had started; he replied that it was five days ago. "'Tis well," said the lady; "go, carry my greetings to his mother." She did not wish any one except her daughter to know of the contents of this letter; and, when she scolded her, they were alone.

When twenty days were over, and Don Diego's mother saw that her son did not return, she waited vainly for many more days and was sorely grieved, sending to all imaginable places in the hope of getting news of him. But she could find out nothing. Having heard something of Ginevra's vexation on account of a hawk, she sent to ask the girl's mother if she knew aught as to her son's whereabouts, and the lady would not tell her of the contents of the letter, fearing to plunge her into despair. Let those imagine the sort of life which

Don Diego's unhappy mother led who know what a mother's love is for a son, the more so if that son be gallant, well bred, and abounding in charming ways. Weeping all day long, she called out for her lost son like one demented, mourning bitterly. Yet she did not die, for grief does not kill, that the greater may be the torment.

Fourteen or fifteen months had now passed since the hapless knight had left his home to be the companion of wild beasts in woods and caves, seeing no man but his servant. The rough life that he led, his bitter sorrowing, and the distress of mind which gnawed still at his heart, had so changed his whole face and mien, that if his mother herself had seen him she would not have recognised him. And now, Fortune, repenting of the manifold indignities which the poor knight thus wrongfully had suffered, began to relent.

It so chanced that the friend in whom Don Diego at one time thought to confide was travelling home from Gascony, and passed through the very country where the luckless knight and his companion had pitched their woodland abode. Missing his way, the gentleman, who was called Roderigo, passed by the grotto, where he saw

various human traces, and when about a bow-shot's length from the cave he thought he spied some one enter it, but could not rightly discern who it was. It was Don Diego, who, returning from a place hard by, whither he often went to mourn his unhappy fate, had heard the tramp of horses, and had taken refuge in the cave.

Perceiving this, Don Roderigo, aware that he had missed the way, ordered one of his men to ride on to see who was in the cave, and ask for the main road. This the servant did, and, noticing that the entrance was barred with stakes, durst not approach, far less inquire the way, as he thought the place looked like an abode of thieves. So, going back to his master, he told him of what he had seen, and of his doubts. But Don Roderigo, being full of courage and spirit, and having a goodly company with him, rode up to the cavern with all his men. Calling out, "What ho! there!" he saw the gate open and Don Diego's servant come out. So changed was he from his former self that he really seemed like a wild man of the woods.

Don Roderigo asked him who he was, and which was the nearest way for him to pursue

his journey. And the servant answered, "We are two poor comrades, who, through ill fortune, have come hither, and who dwell here, doing penance for our sins; but as to what country it be, or what road you should take, I can tell you nothing."

Don Roderigo was desirous to enter the grotto; accordingly, with some of his men, he went inside. Seeing Don Diego walking up and down, but not recognising him, he asked him the same question which he had asked of his servant. As thus they talked, the men who had come in with Don Roderigo walked here and there about the cavern, looking at everything. At last they spied in a corner two saddles, one of which was richly ornamented and curiously wrought. So in jest one of them said to Don Diego's servant, "Good father hermit, I see here neither horse, mule, nor ass, so it were better you should sell me these saddles!" "If they please you," answered the other, "take them, gentlemen, and without price." Meanwhile, Don Roderigo having talked to no purpose with the supposed hermit, called out his men, "Ho! there! let's be off and leave these hermits to God. We must look about us

elsewhere till we find some one to show us the way." Then one of his followers said, "See here, sir, are two saddles, of which one is quaintly garnished, and seems to have been that of some jennet." Don Roderigo made them bring the saddles out, and seeing the richer one of the two his eyes straightway lighted upon an escutcheon, painted in masterly fashion, on the saddle-bow, underneath which this motto was written, "Que brantare la fè es cosa meux fea." In our tongue this means, "Breach of faith is of all things most foul." When he saw the escutcheon and the motto, he at once knew that the saddle belonged to Don Diego, and it flashed across his mind that one of the hermits might prove to be the long-lost knight. So he gazed intently at both of them, yet failed to recognise any likeness to his friend, so completely had this wild life and incessant grief changed his features. Then he asked them how they had come by the saddles.

Don Diego, who knew his friend at first sight, and greatly feared to be recognised by him, changed colour somewhat at this, and replied that they had found them in the cavern. Don

Roderigo noticed his confusion, and looking closer at him spied a mole on his neck. Then, being firmly persuaded that this was indeed Don Diego, he threw his arms about his neck and embraced him tenderly, saying, "Of a truth you are Don Diego." The other hermit, who well knew it was Don Roderigo, when he saw him embrace his master with tears in his eyes, could no longer refrain from weeping, and sobbed bitterly. At the touch of his dearest friend's embrace, Don Diego's eyes also filled with tears, though answer he made none. Don Roderigo continued to exclaim, "Ay, but you are indeed he! You are my dear friend Don Diego!" while the hot tears made channels down his cheeks, and that which words could not express emotion readily revealed. So he went on, saying, "You cannot deny it, sir; I know you, and I am sure that you are he." Thus Don Diego was at last obliged to make himself known, saying, "I am indeed that unhappy Don Diego, once such a great friend of yours; and, since fortune has brought you to this lonely place, I beg you to be content with having seen me, and then go hence, leaving me to finish here what little life remains to me;

never reveal the fact that I am alive, and give orders to your men to do the same."

With tears in his eyes, Roderigo answered, "I thank God that I have found you, which I never thought to do, for your mother and all believed you to be dead. Now, make ready to return home with me, and rejoice your mother's heart. She grieves greatly at your loss, so bring comfort to her and to all your friends."

Many words passed between them, but Don Diego would not hear of returning to his home, and, taking his friend aside, he told him the whole tale of his misfortune and of his resolve. When Don Roderigo heard all this, the good fellow was like to have swooned for pity, thinking of his own mistress, whom he most ardently loved; and that perhaps a like mischance might befall him; he was as one dead, for he pitied Don Diego as he would have pitied himself. He proposed not to go away without him, trying all he could to persuade him to give up so rough and bestial a life. But he could never say enough to induce him to depart with him, for Don Diego still declared that he would never quit the place until he had regained Ginevra's favour.

Seeing that to persuade him was a vain task, Don Roderigo besought his friend to please him at least in this, viz., that he would promise to wait in the grotto two months for him, and meanwhile change his present mode of life, as he had good hopes of getting Ginevra to make her peace with him. To this he consented. Don Roderigo then gave him his own camp-bed which he took with him on his travels, and would have him change his hermit's dress for his own clothes, which were still in the cave. But Don Diego said he would not change his clothes until he had got back his peace of mind. Don Roderigo also left him two of his mounted serving-men with sufficient money, so that one or other of these might always bring from some neighbouring hamlet food and other necessaries to the cave until such time as their master should return. Then, with many tears, he took his leave of Don Diego, and set out for home, being careful to note the road he would have to take when coming back again. As he journeyed, he thought of nothing but of his unhappy friend's mischance, and blamed the damsel's heartless cruelty.

On reaching home, he bade all his men say

never a word about Don Diego, and, being a neighbour and frequent guest of Ginevra's mother, he visited the castle more often than usual, keeping a most careful watch upon all the movements of the girl's life. To-day, it might be, he heard this, and to-morrow that, and he soon found out that her trusted confidant was a serving-man who had been brought up in the house. So he sought to get upon familiar terms with this fellow, and by gifts to win his good-will. It was not long before in this way he got to know all Ginevra's secrets. He thus heard that, after her quarrel with Don Diego, the girl had fallen in love with a young Biscayan, who held some small appointment in his native town, and served in her household as carver—a man of many words, who gave out that he would have a large fortune at the death of certain of his kinsmen. He was not at the castle just then, but would shortly return thither; and, so soon as he came back, Ginevra had settled to go off with him to Biscay, accompanied by a waiting-woman and the serving-man, her confidant. Don Roderigo was astounded at the news of this great folly upon which the damsel was bent, and within himself

he said, "Alas, girl, with what ingratitude and cruelty do you repay the long and faithful service of so noble, rich, and brave a knight as Don Diego, who loves you far more than his own life! But if my powers fail not, I hope to thwart your ill-ordered plans, and to let you be Don Diego's and not another's." Then he said to the man who had told him of the scheme, "In truth the girl does well to get herself a husband, since her mother seems to care little if he marries her or not. She is young, handsome, and of the proper age, and has made choice of a gentleman. If he is not as rich as could be wished, she at any rate has enough for both, as, at her mother's death, she will inherit everything."

After this Roderigo kept on the watch for the return of the Biscayan, and in three days' time the youth came back with two of his countrymen, stalwart fellows, who should accompany him when he went off with Ginevra. On the very day of his arrival, Don Roderigo was at Ginevra's castle, and said to the serving-man who had let him know all, "The lover has come back, I see, so you will soon be off. When do you start?"

"According to that which my mistress told me an hour ago," replied the man, "we start on such a night at the fourth hour." Having got to know this, the knight returned home to his castle, where he gave orders to get everything ready which he deemed necessary for the purpose that he had in view.

The night being come when Ginevra was to escape with her lover, at the fourth hour she and her waiting-maid came so softly down by a ladder from their window that none heard them, and, crossing the grounds, they came to where horses were in readiness, when all mounted and rode off. Don Roderigo knew the road they would take, and with ten sturdy fellows, his henchmen, had already posted himself in ambush in a wood which was miles away from any habitation. And, behold, about two hours before day the fugitives approached the ambush, when Don Roderigo rushed forth with his men, crying out, "What, ho! traitors! You are all dead men!" Then, couching his lance, he ran straight at the lover, whom, though it was night, he recognised, and, having dealt him therewith a deadly blow, he struck the point of the lance through his throat again

and again, so that the poor wretch fell dead. When the Biscayans saw that their leader was killed, not knowing who had done the deed (for the knight and his men wore strange attire to prevent recognition), they set spurs to their horses and escaped, when Roderigo's men set themselves to take the two women and the servant, bidding them fear nothing. Don Roderigo had the dead youth placed on his horse's back, first plugging the holes in his throat with cloths, so that no more blood might come from them. Then he ordered all to mount horse and ride on.

Ginevra shrieked loudly, and made great lament, when one of the armed men, who wore a great black beard, and two big goggle eyes, that made him look like the Prince of Devils himself, rushed at her, poniard in hand, and with a fearful voice thus threatened her, "I swear to God that if you scream I will slit your throat! Hold your noise, for you have got more than you deserve; all that is done is for your good, though you know it not!"

Riding thus, they soon reached a little chapel standing off the high-road; here they buried the dead man as quickly as they could, and then

pursued their way. About four or five hours after daybreak they halted in a thicket near a village, sending thither for food and water for themselves and their beasts. Ginevra continued to weep, and ate hardly anything, being nowise able to discover who they were that had carried her off. They lodged o' nights in houses far from the villages, and none of the fellows were allowed to speak with Ginevra or her two servants.

One night, when they lodged at a hamlet about seven miles from Don Diego's cave, Roderigo despatched a messenger to his friend, letting him know all that had happened, and informing him that he and his companions would be with him next day before the dinner hour. It was about fifty days since the hapless lover had been left with some hope of regaining his lady's favour. During this time he had eaten better food and mixed in merrier company, so that he seemed to have got back a good part of his old gaiety and comeliness. When he learnt from the messenger how things stood, he was greatly astonished—half beside himself, in fact, at the thought that in an hour he should see her whom he so deeply

loved. He felt his blood boil and his heart beat, while a cold sweat overspread all his limbs. Indeed, he could scarce contain himself, and was quite at a loss what to do. Meanwhile, as they approached the grotto, Don Roderigo came close to Ginevra, from whom until now he had kept aloof; and to her, who still wept incessantly for her dead lover and for her own luckless plight, he said—

"I know, my lady, that you will be mightily astonished to see me, and it will seem to you a most cruel thing that I, your friend, that you have never harmed, should capture you on the highway and bear you off to wild and lonely places. Yet, when you know the cause, I doubt not but that you will submit to reason, and so accord me praise. As we are now near the place whither I have to take you, let me tell you that it was not to rob you of your chastity that I brought you here (as you know I love another), but to restore to you honour and good name, which, recking naught, you were about to stain. What I did was for the sake of others who, were I in a like trouble, would do the same for me. To keep you no longer in suspense, Don Diego, whom once you loved so well, and

who so faithfully loved, yet loves, ay, and even adores, you; to him who, unable to bear your cruel disdain, in despair has shut himself up in a cave, living like a savage, with never a hope of again belonging to the world—it is to him that I am taking you."

Then he told her how on coming back from Gascony he had found Don Diego in the deserted grotto, and how he had planned everything with him, begging her to dry her tears, put off her wrath, for which there was no sort of reason, and receive Don Diego into her usual favour.

At this speech the despairing damsel was so astonished that, in her confusion, she seemed as one demented, and she could hardly utter a word. Moreover, her grief and fury at the death of her new lover were such that, could she have torn out Don Roderigo's eyes with her own hands, she would willingly have done it. The mere mention of him she so bitterly hated seemed to redouble her wrath, and bursting with rage she turned angrily to the knight, and said, "I know not how I can ever forgive such an injury as this which you thus disloyally have done to me. Do not think that, like some low woman, I shall rave and

scold—this is no place to do so; but I will take good care to keep all within my heart; and if ever the chance comes to revenge myself, no matter how, I will let you know that your work was the work of an assassin and not of a knight. Enough if I now say that it is not your business to take more care of my affairs than I choose to take myself. I am free to do what I like, therefore let me go where I please; and, instead of assuming the control of other folks' business, you will do well to look after your own. Since you desire to bring me to where Don Diego is, so long as you keep me thus a prisoner, you have the power to do so; but you can never force me of my own free will to stay with him, nor make me love him at all. In sooth, I would liefer kill myself than suffer him to enjoy me; therefore, you had best let me go with my servants where it pleases me."

The knight endeavoured with many arguments to persuade her to do that which was best for her; but all was in vain, so obstinate was she and so wrathful. Conversing thus, they came to the cavern. Seeing his cruel mistress, who had already dismounted, Don Diego threw himself humbly at

her feet, and with bitter tears besought pardon if ever he had offended her. But she, full of venom and feminine rage, turned away her face, never deigning to look at or to speak to him.

Seeing this, Don Diego knelt before her, and with many prayers and tears thus addressed her: "Lady mine, as my sincere fidelity may not gain your belief, and as, without your favour, I cannot live, deny me not this, at least—the last boon I ask of you, viz., with your own hands to revenge yourself upon me in such a way as you best please. So shall I be exceedingly contented, seeing that you would fain be appeased by my blood. And, in truth, it were far better to satisfy you by dying than to live on in your disfavour. As I know that my life vexes you, and that my death will please you, it may chance that I shall kill myself with my own hand, so that at least I can say that for once I contented you."

Harder grew the damsel than a rock by the sea-shore, never deigning to say one word in answer to the knight's pleading. Angered beyond measure at such cruelty, Don Roderigo now addressed the girl, saying, with a stern mien, "I see that I shall have to help knead the dough,

and do what I would rather not. So, listen to me, Ginevra, and mark what I say. Either forgive the knight who has never offended you, and grant him your favour, which in a thousand ways he has earned, or expect me to deal cruelly with you and yours, forcing you against your will to do what you ought already to have done of your own accord. I swear to God that there never was a woman as ungrateful and as cruel as you. Even had he accepted the cursed hawk, as you believed in your despite, and had he loved Don Ferrando's daughter more than you, do you think he would have killed the bird, and come to dwell in this lonely place, living in a cave like some wild beast? If he had so desired, what could have prevented him from wedding her and leading a merry life with her? It would serve you right if he despised you and gave you as food to wolves; then you would have good cause to lament, and he could soon get himself another mistress. If excessive love did not blind him to the truth, he might justly reproach you, bitterly hating and despising you as his cruel and deadly foe, when he thinks how, without cause, you so basely forsook him. And, by God! if you had

but pitched on a gallant as noble, rich, and comely as he! A fine choice you made among all the host of gentlemen in our country! You must needs pick up with an inferior, and love a penniless, swaggering Biscayan, who never yet spoke the truth except by mistake. Methinks, when he got you to Biscay, he would have made you look after his goats, for everybody knows what he possessed, and, even if he had stopped at home with only a page to wait on him, he would not have had enough to live six months. Perhaps you may say, 'But I am rich, and have enough to live in a style that befits my station.' Remember that your mother is yet a young woman, who may live a long while, and that, so long as she lives, she is mistress of all the property. Had you taken the Biscayan as your husband, she would never have wished to see you again; and in this case I cannot tell how you would have lived; in fact, you would have envied the dead. Forsooth, if Don Diego were to take my advice, his affairs would go better, and you would be eternally dishonoured, not easily finding any one willing to wed you; for, if it came out that you had run off with a Biscayan,

one of your household servants, who would think but that you had been his paramour? Folk are far more prone to believe what is bad than what is good. However, since Don Diego wishes it, let him pursue this love of his, prizing and loving you far beyond your deserts. Therefore heed what I say; put off this your stubbornness and cruelty, and be well advised, so that you do not come to that which you would not, for be sure that I do not take anything in hand which I leave unaccomplished. So, then, I put before you water and fire: choose which you like best."

At this Ginevra grew harder and more stubborn than ever. With a wrathful countenance she turned to the knight, and, not as a timid girl, but as a woman used to a thousand strokes of ill fortune, she haughtily made answer—

"You have spoken at your pleasure, sir knight. Whether for good or ill, I am careless to dispute with you; but I would have you know that I am ready to suffer all and every cruel torture rather than love this faithless man. If, as threatened, you give me my death, I shall accept this gladly, and so bear my hapless lover and

husband company whom you have so cruelly slain. So begin at whichever end you like; you will only find my constancy increase, for neither you nor the whole world will ever make me love that man."

These bitter words so overcame Don Roderigo that for a while he could hardly believe his senses, while Don Diego fell to the ground in a swoon. The rest of the company came round about Ginevra, saying all they could to soften her heart, but she remained for all their words unmoved, like some hard rock that faces the waves of the sea. When Don Roderigo had in a measure recovered himself, and thought what to do, for he could not bear to see his friend in such grief, he said to Ginevra with a sigh, "I marvel greatly at you, nor can I conceive how such fierce cruelty may have its home in the breast of such a maid. It seemed to me as if just now I was before my own lady-love, and that your barbarous answer had fallen from her lips. Hearing it, my heart was as if stabbed by a sharp dagger, and even now it seems transfixed in every place by spears. By my own, then, which is imaginary, I measure Don Diego's most bitter grief which ceaselessly

he suffers for you, so I have determined to rid you of annoyance, and with one pain cure him of all others which he endures, believing that in time he will perceive that what I did was for his welfare, and that I shall gain universal praise therefor." Then turning to his men, he said, "Take this cruel damsel to some other grotto hereabouts, and deal out to her such punishment as she deserves. Moreover, to keep matters secret, cut the throat of her two servants, that no one may survive to tell the story."

At this barbarous order, Ginevra, terror-struck, gave a piercing shriek, while the luckless servant and the waiting-woman wept aloud for mercy. Don Roderigo's men made a show as if they would carry out their master's orders, when with calm, tearless countenance Ginevra said to them "My good fellows, prithee kill me alone and spare my servants. Why, Roderigo, would you put them to death, who have never wronged you?"

Then Don Diego, recovering himself, motioned all to stay, and addressing Roderigo, said—

"Sir, though I should live a thousand years, I might never repay such obligations as are mine

to you. That is far beyond my power. Yet, knowing how much you love me, I beg you to do me one favour, and so increase my indebtedness, if ever that were possible. Be pleased, then, to escort this my lady to her own home, bearing her such company as you would do were she your own sister. For grievous though it be for me to be scorned by her whom I love more than my life, it is yet a far bitterer deeper grief to see her afflicted through me. Therefore, in order that by her suffering she may not add to mine, let her go free where best it pleases her, while I will remain in this deserted cave, ending here the last few days of my life, comforted at least by the thought that she is quit of her trouble."

Passing wonderful indeed is the power of love when he is so minded to use that power, and often it chances that those things which seem impossible he makes light and easy. Her lover's devotion, all the misery in which she saw him, and the prospect of a cruel death before her eyes—these things had not been able to soften Ginevra, but now, at his last words, the eyes of her understanding were opened, and all her

obstinacy melted away. She saw how true and constant her lover was, and throwing her arms about his neck she wept long and bitterly, being unable to say a word. Then kissing him, she besought his pardon. Of Don Diego's joy let those conceive who love, and who perhaps may have to suffer a like sorrow. Indeed, all those present shared his great gladness of heart.

After consulting the lovers, Don Roderigo despatched a trusty messenger to their mothers, advising them of what he meant to do.

Then they dined together in company, and afterwards all took horse, and in four days reached Don Roderigo's home. At the good news of their children, and when they heard what had been settled, the two mothers gave out that Don Diego and Ginevra the Fair had gone away by mutual consent to Don Roderigo's castle, where they had been privately married. And to give the public ceremony all due splendour and magnificence, they ordered great preparations to be made, as beseemed their wealth and noble birth. Hereupon the lovers, accompanied by Don Roderigo, returned to Ginevra's home, being met by Don Diego's mother and a noble and goodly company.

The wedding was then celebrated in sumptuous fashion, and Don Diego and his bride looked forward to a life of continual happiness, their past tribulations seeming to them but as a sweet memory.

AN AVARICIOUS PRIEST is nicely cheated by certain good fellows, who rob him of a fat sheep.

MOST affable ladies, and you, courteous gentlemen, I would that our friend Messer Andrea da Melzi had not been obliged to leave after dinner, so that he himself could have told you what now I am about to relate, for he is as fine a speaker as any in Milan, full of witty sayings, and he knows the tale in question far better than I do. But in his absence, if you would like to hear about the tricks sometimes played upon miserly priests, I will endeavour to content you.

Not many years ago, in the village of Magenta, there lived a certain Don Pietro, who was the parish priest. He was an elderly man and unspeakably avaricious. Though he had a good stipend, and, besides this, got a living by the daily alms and offerings made for the dead, he was always afraid that he would die of hunger.

He himself would never ask a priest or a novice to have so much as a glass of wine with him at his house, though he always accepted the invitations of others, when he ate and drank his money's worth, so to speak. At home he was wont to have the daintiest fare, and kept an elderly woman who was a most perfect cook. He was always letting capons be fattened for him—the best that could be got in the whole village; and when quails were in season he made conserves of these to last for the whole year, doing the same thing with turtle-doves. Thus, in accordance with the season, he always had birds and game in the house, and where guzzling was concerned the glutton never would begrudge money to get himself any tasty morsel. Indeed, failing money for this, he would readily have pawned cassock, crucifix, consecrated stone, and eke the very chalice itself. But though on any Thursday evening he found himself head over ears in food, do not think that he would ever have asked any one to share it with him; so that his clerk and housewife and two servingmen had a good time of it, and led an easy rollicking life.

Once in November a young gentleman of Milan happened to be out of town hunting, in company with a friend, and they came to stay about two miles distant from where the priest lived. They heard of his avarice and of the rich provisions which he always had by him in the house; also that, among other things, he had been fattening up a big sheep which he thought of killing at Christmas-tide, so that in the cold weather it would keep better.

On knowing this, our young friend determined to rob the priest of his sheep, and eat it in a pasty with certain other good comrades of his. So he sent for two of his henchmen, fellows that would have made a sauce for Satan, and told them what he meant to do. One of these wights was called Mangiavillano, and the other Malvicino; in war-time they were past masters, both of them, in the art of pillaging. They agreed to do all that was requisite, and, having got their orders, they set about thinking how to steal the sheep, so that they might succeed in doing this without any noise. So Malvicino said, "Comrade, if we but know how to go to work, we're the luckiest fellows alive. When snaring that hare yesterday,

after all that coursing, I passed Giacomaccio Oca's farm, and I saw a lot of nuts which they have not yet taken indoors. 'Sblood! but we'll go and have a peck at them, and make some nice garlic sauce, for, without that, the sheep is not worth a stiver." "Odds bodikins! but you're right," answered Mangiavillano, "so let us do as I propose. About the fourth or fifth hour after sunset I will go to Messere's house, and easily get into the place where he keeps the sheep. First of all I will muzzle it to prevent its crying out, and then hoist it on to my shoulders. Meanwhile, go you and get the nuts, and besides these try and see if you can manage to collar two or three geese; old Giacomaccio always has such fine fat ones." "Holy Virgin!" quoth the other, "that were a fine stroke, if I could but do it, but you know that geese play the very devil, hearing the least noise that anybody makes. I would rather try and crib four or five hens, roosters, as they say that those are fatter than the rest." "Go to," replied Mangiavillano, "you are an oaf; chickens and capons we have every day at our master's house. We want none of those, but try and see if you can't get a goose

or two. Now, the one who does his work first must wait for the other inside the old vault without a cover to it, at the corner of the churchyard between the church and the priest's house. I have often been in it before, and there are no bones of dead men, or anything else, but a few stones that the boys sometimes throw into it. So the first to get there must go inside." "All right," said the other.

At the hour fixed each went about doing his share of the work. Malvicino got to where the nuts were spread about, and filled himself a bag of these at his leisure. He had hard work to steal the geese, for they were too near the farm-labourers' quarters, but he managed to get hold of three of the plumpest, and, wringing their necks, put them with the nuts. Then, bag on back, he made for the churchyard, and, seeing that Mangiavillano was not there, went into the old vault to wait.

Now during the day Don Pietro had had a bad attack of gout, which, when he got to bed, would not let him sleep nor his housekeeper either, and he kept moaning and groaning without ceasing. The other two servants he had sent

away on certain business of his own. Mangiavillano heard this noise in the house, and consequently he could not set about stealing the sheep as quickly as he would have liked, but had to wait until every one should be abed. As the gout pains grew ever more excruciating, Don Pietro said to his clerk, "Son, I remember that some days ago Messer Girolamo Arluno, the doctor who, as you know, cured me last summer, sent me a bottle of frogs' oil, which he said was excellent for soothing the pain when it became violent. I put this bottle away in the cupboard of the sacristy, always forgetting to bring it home. Light a candle and fetch it for me, and God's blessing go with you."

The priest's house was a good bowshot distant from the church, so the clerk took a lantern, and, lighting the bit of candle in it, started for the church. Meanwhile Malvicino, being tired of waiting so long, began to crack the nuts and eat them. On getting near the churchyard the clerk heard the noise of this nut-cracking, when in a trice he took to his heels and ran back to the house, where, all pale and trembling, he said to the priest, "O Father! I am like to expire, for

in the churchyard I heard the dead making a great noise. Though you were to give me the Abbey of Chiaravalle, I would not go to the church by myself. I have had one of the finest scares that ever anybody had in this world, the worst, I warrant, since I was born." "Why, you must be mad!" quoth the priest; "make the sign of the Holy Cross, and do not be afraid. You ought to know that the dead are dead, and can neither move about nor feel. Go, go, dear son of mine, bring me the bottle, so that by using the ointment all this pain may cease, and I can get a little rest." "That's what you say, Messire," replied the terror-struck cleric, "but I would not go back there—not for all the gold in the world. I know well enough what I heard. Have you not often heard it said that the dead do mortals harm? The day that Chiappino del Gatto of Monza died, a terrible man was plainly seen, black and hideous. There be many who declare that sometimes this man appears with a head, and at other times without, while often he howls like a dog. You may say what you like, I am not going to let those spirits get hold of me and do me a mischief."

When Don Pietro saw that the clerk would on no account go and fetch the ointment he was greatly annoyed, and, being no longer able to bear the tortures of the gout, he said, "If you have the courage to carry me, I will go with you and see what these marvels are of which you speak; but look to it that it be not the old wine that makes you rave like this, and see fire-flies in November. Yesterday, worse luck, I sent away Bettino and Cagnuola, or else, if they were here, they would go and get me the ointment to remove this pain. But tell me, have you seen to the mare and the sheep?" "Yes, I have," replied the clerk. "They are all right, and I have locked the stable-door. I could carry you well enough to the church and back, if you have the heart, for thank God I am big and stout, with a fine pair of shoulders."

So the priest determined to be carried to the church, and, donning his fur coat and putting hose on his feet, he got upon the clerk's shoulders. Mangiavillano in the garden listened to them talking as they went along, but when he heard that the two servants (about whom he had his doubts) were away he muttered to himself, "The

fat sheep is ours." Moreover when he found that the priest was going to be carried to the church, he first of all crept noiselessly out of the garden and went towards the churchyard, that he too might hear all the marvellous things of which the clerk spoke. He at once perceived that the noise came from the old vault where he had told his comrade to wait for him. Vexed at having to wait so long, Malvicino was moving about in the vault, and the bag of nuts made a rattling that in the dead of night sounded somewhat alarming. At first Mangiavillano was for running away, but, listening closer, he knew that the noise was made by his comrade as he kept cracking nuts with a stone; and he said to himself, "My companion has done his share of the work, while I have not even begun mine, but as that old devil of a priest is being carried to church and there is nobody at home, I could not have a better chance. By the body of the Turk, I'll carry off the sheep." So he got back through the hedge across the courtyard to the stable, which he easily opened, and putting the muzzle on the sheep, and tying its four legs together, he whipped it on to his shoulders and went back to the churchyard.

Meantime Don Pietro, who sorely wanted his gout-salve, had been helped on to the clerk's back by the housewife. She walked in front with the lantern towards the churchyard, and the good clerk followed, puffing and blowing under the heavy load that he carried, while the priest repeated certain orisons. Malvicino continued cracking his nuts with the stone, and when the clerk heard him he said, "Now, messire, was I raving?" "Just get on," answered the priest. As they came close to the vault Malvicino heard the clerk's hard breathing, and thought it was Mangiavillano overcome by the weight of the fat sheep, so without another thought he threw down the bag of nuts and jumped out, crying, "I am glad you have come, how devilish out of breath you are, and isn't he a fat fellow!" Hearing the bag fall and these words, the clerk was paralysed with terror. He dropped Don Pietro there and then, as he tremblingly answered, "Fat or lean, you can take him, for here he is!" So saying he ran off home as fast as ever he could, leaving the poor priest lying on the ground. But being just as terrified, Don Pietro forgot the gout pains, and took to his heels with such alacrity

that one would never have thought him to be a cripple. The housewife also, more dead than alive, rushed away, shrieking as loudly as she could.

Hearing all this, Malvicino could not imagine what had happened. Their screams and scuffling perplexed him, and he feared that he might suddenly be caught there by some one, when, lo and behold! Mangiavillano appeared, bursting with laughter at the priest's flight. Recognising his comrade, Malvicino went to meet him and said, "What in the devil's name was all this that I heard?" Mangiavillano told him everything that had ensued, and then, with geese, nuts, and sheep, they both went back home.

The young Milanese gentleman when he heard of their adventures laughed loudly, and to the fat sheep, garlic sauce, and all, due justice was done, while the miserly Don Pietro remained thus most deftly cheated. But being kindhearted and full of courtesy, the gentleman soon after managed to indemnify him privately for the loss of his sheep, making good to Giacomaccio also the theft of his geese and his nuts. Thus they both deemed themselves paid back in full, though ignorant from whom such payment came.

GERARDO secretly weds his mistress and sets out for Baruti. The girl's father would give her in marriage; she swoons with grief, and is buried for dead. That selfsame day her true husband returns, and, taking her forth from the tomb, discovers that she is not dead; whereupon he tends her, and formally celebrates his nuptials with her.

THIS day we have discoursed at length, most gracious ladies, and you, courteous youths, of the many and various chances which, often beyond all human foresight, are wont to happen in love-matters, and how that often, when a man has lost all hope of achieving that which he most ardently desires, this hope revives, and what was bewailed as lost is on a sudden regained. And, to those who ponder thereon, these accidents are often most marvellous, and very difficult of belief to him who considers not the unstable nature of earthly things. One, may

be, who has felt sure of attaining the long-wished-for end of his enterprise, sees himself suddenly far distant from it, and wholly balked of it. Another, after long and distressing fatigues, believes his labour to have been vain; and when his mind has discarded its first desire, and turns aside into another way, behold that which he abandoned he suddenly finds within his grasp, and he has entire possession of what he never thought to gain. Thus, in matters human, blind fortune often plays pranks at every turn of her unstable wheel; and, if in all her acts she be changeful and wayward, it is in matters of love that we notice that she is most inconstant.

But to show that, as the old saw has it, actions speak louder than words, and give a sure guaranty of that which is alleged, I would fain here tell the story of what once happened in the famous city of Venice. Let me say, then, that in this city there once lived two gentlemen whom fortune had abundantly endowed with her gifts, and whose palaces on the Grand Canal almost faced each other. The master of the one was called Messer Paolo, and he had a wife and two children only, a daughter and a son. The son's name was Gerardo. The name of

the other gentleman was Messer Pietro. He had no children, except a daughter of about thirteen or fourteen years, who was named Elena. Her exceeding beauty surpassed all belief, and, as each day she waxed in years, her loveliness grew likewise in marvellous fashion. Gerardo, who was about twenty years old, carried on a secret intrigue with the wife of a barber, she being very pleasing and well-favoured. Almost every day with his servant he passed under the windows by Elena's house in a gondola, down one of the side canals, on his wonted journey.

Thus it happened that, as mischances often come when least looked for, Elena's mother fell sick, and in a short time, to the great grief of her husband and only child, she died. On the other side of the little canal, opposite Messer Pietro's house, there dwelt a gentleman with his wife and four daughters. Messer Pietro greatly desired to cheer his daughter with pleasant company, and not long after his wife's death he sent Elena's nurse with a message to the father of the four girls, praying him to let them come one feast-day and play with Elena, a request which this courteous gentleman granted. Thus it happened that, almost every feast-day, the four sisters

came readily and easily to Elena's house, for, without being seen, they crossed the little canal in a gondola, and landed at Messer Pietro's door. When together, the five damsels played many games fitted to their sex and age; among others, they played forfeits, which was a game of ball, the ball being thrown from one to another, and whoever missed catching it, but let it fall to the ground, made a fault and lost the game. The four sisters, being from seventeen to twenty-one years old, were each of them in love with some young man; and often, while playing forfeits, now one, now another, and sometimes all four, would run out and look over the balconies at their lovers and others as they passed in gondolas along the canal. Elena, who was most simple, and had never yet felt the amorous flames, grew much displeased at this, and pulled them back by their gowns, to make them go on with the game. But they, to whom the sight of their lovers gave far more joy than the ball, cared little for Elena, but stood fast by the windows, sometimes flinging flowers or trifles of that sort, according to the season, to their lovers as they went by under the balconies.

One day, when teased by Elena for not coming away from the balcony, one of her playmates said

to her, "Elena, if you could taste but a tithe of the pleasure that we get in amusing ourselves at these windows, by Christ's Cross! you would like to stop there as much as we do, and would care nothing whatever for forfeits; but you are a simpleton, knowing nothing as yet of such traffic." But Elena gave no heed to what was said, and kept on calling them back to play with her, just as a child would do.

It so happened that, one holiday, the sisters were hindered by some cause from coming to play with Elena. So, sad and melancholy, she took her stand at one of the windows overlooking the canal. She felt very lonely and unhappy at not being with her companions as usual. While the simple maiden stood thus, Gerardo went by in his boat, to visit the barber's wife, and seeing the girl at the window glanced up at her. When she observed this, she turned towards him, and threw him a merry look, such as she had often seen her playmates give to their gallants. At this Gerardo wondered much, for perhaps until now he had never thought about her nor even seen her; and he returned her a loving look, while she, thinking that this was a game, repaid him with a smile. Then he passed on, and

soon the boatman said to him, "Master, did you notice that fair damsel over there, and mark how she greeted you with smiles and merry glances? By the very gospels of San Zachary! she seems to be a far daintier morsel than the barber's good lady. I'll warrant that she would give you a night of mirth, if not of sleep." Gerardo feigned not to have regarded her, and he said to the oarsman, "I want to see who she is, and if she is of the sort you tell me, turn the gondola round and go very slowly past the house." Elena was still there, on the balcony, where the youth had first noted her, and he, drifting gently past in his open boat,* on seeing the lovely Elena, looked up again at her and smiled, ogling her amorously. It chanced that, behind her ear, she wore a beautiful clove carnation; and taking this out as the gondola passed under the balcony, she let the lovely perfumed flower fall as near the youth as she could.

Gerardo, beyond measure delighted at what had befallen, picked up the fair blossom, and, making fitting obeisance to the damsel, he gaily kissed the flower again and again. The scent of it and the beauty of Elena took such deep seat in his heart

* That is, without the *felze* or cabin.

that all other amorous fires burning there were in a trice put out. In truth, the flames of his love for Elena took such strong hold of him that it no longer seemed possible, I will not say to quench these, but even to abate them in the very least degree.

Thus, consumed with this new fire, Gerardo gave up all dealings with the barber's wife, and surrendered himself wholly to this sweet and lovely girl. But, being very simple, and not having as yet opened her breast to the darts of love, she took no great heed of Gerardo as he passed her window, though it pleased her to see him, as if this interchange of glances were just a game. Every day, and five or six times a day, the amorous youth passed along this way, but he never could get to see Elena, except on a holiday, since the damsel, in whom love had not yet been roused, deemed it unmeet to play this game on work-days. Loving her most ardently, Gerardo fell into grievous discontent, finding no way even to see his beloved, far less to show his affection for her by words or letters. Thus vainly he burned with great desire, trying as best he could on feast-days to reveal to her by signs how the flames of love tormented him.

Of this she understood little. Yet, after a good while, her pleasure at the sight of Gerardo increased, and she would have had him show himself a score of times an hour, but on feast-days only; and for this reason, to avoid being disturbed at these times by her playmates, and finding greater contentment at the sight of Gerardo than at the game of forfeits, with some excuse or another she managed to get quit of her companions.

Matters had got thus far, when one day it chanced that, as the disconsolate lover was going on foot along the roadway or *fondamenta*, as they say in Venice, he saw Elena's nurse, who had once been his, knocking at the door of his lady-love's house. Being at some distance from her, he called out to her, "Nurse! Nurse!" But she, through the noise of her knocking, could not hear his call, and when the door was opened she went in. Gerardo hastened to overtake the nurse before she entered. Turning round to shut the door, she saw him coming, and left it open until he got there. Arrived at the threshold, he saw Elena in the court-yard, and, whether from the supreme joy of seeing himself near her, or from a sudden spasm of the heart, he swooned, and fell senseless to the ground,

his face turning so pale that he seemed a corpse. At so sad and unlooked-for a sight as this, Elena, with her attendant and the nurse, were terrified, and they fell to weeping and calling out for help. Urged thereto by I know not what, the damsel threw herself upon Gerardo, but the cautious nurse soon persuaded her to rise and go into a room half-way up the stairs. Then she stooped down, and by shaking and rubbing him sought to revive Gerardo. She called him by name, but, seeing that he gave no answer, with the serving-girl's help she drew him inside and shut the door. The nurse loved the young man, for she had suckled him with her own milk, and in measureless grief at this mischance she wept bitterly thereat.

Hearing her cries, Messer Pietro, who with others of the family was within, ran down to know what had happened, and the nurse, lamenting, told him all. Being a courteous, kindly gentleman, he caused the youth to be softly carried upstairs, and laid upon a sick-bed, where he tended him as would a father. Seeing, however, that no remedy availed, he decided to have him taken to his father, Messer Paolo. So he put him in a gondola, and sent him across the canal, the nurse and a discreet messenger

going also, to acquaint Messer Paolo with what had happened. On hearing the news, and seeing his son lie there as one dead, he was overcome by great grief, and well-nigh swooned. And of his bitter tears and lamentations let those judge who should see their own beloved son in such a plight, for, though he had a married daughter, Gerardo counted as his darling and only son, whom he fondly loved. While then the father, the mother, and all those in the house wept and made lament, the hapless youth was brought to his chamber and laid upon the bed. Doctors came to his side, and with them a leech of special skill, who diligently sought by various means to call back the living spirit that was lost, and had sought to quit its home. After long effort they succeeded in making Gerardo draw breath, and by degrees he came to. So soon as his tongue was loosed, he, stammering, cried out, "Nurse! Nurse!" And she being there, replied, "My child, here I am! what would you have?" The youth had not quite regained his senses, and imagined that he was still running after the nurse, so he called out "Nurse! Nurse!" but when his wits came back, and he saw where he was, with his parents, relatives,

and friends standing about his bed, and though he knew not the reason for this (as one who remembers not what has befallen him), he yet had sense enough to perceive that this was not a fit place to tell the nurse what he desired to reveal to her. So, speaking of other things, he declared that no further ailment troubled him, which filled all his kinsmen with incredible pleasure. When asked by his father and the doctors what had caused him to swoon, he replied that he knew not the reason.

At last, one by one, they who were in the room went out, leaving him alone with the nurse, to whom, after many heartfelt sighs, he thus spoke: "Sweet mother mine, from the grievous misadventure that has befallen me, you can easily understand the pass to which I have come, for in truth my life must soon reach its bitter end if I do not find succour. Nor can I tell whither to turn for help, if not to you alone, who, it is plain, hold my death or my life in your hands. If so minded, you can give me such aid as shall keep me full of life and health, but, if you deny me this help, you will of a surety take my life and become my assassin."

At these words the kindhearted nurse comforted the sorrowing Gerardo, and bade him be of good cheer, and try to recover his lost strength. She freely promised to do his behests, so far as it lay in her power, offering to serve him with all her heart, and to help him with all her strength, nor ever grow weary in his service. Hearing these lavish promises, the youth took heart of grace, and gave the nurse great thanks. Then again he begged and conjured her as best he might, telling her of the strange nature of his love, seeing that he knew not the name of his beloved, nor who she might be, but only that she was one of the five whom he saw on holidays at the windows of Messer Pietro's house, sometimes with others, and sometimes alone. The nurse gave diligent ear to all that Gerardo told her, secretly asking herself who the maid might be with whom he was so passionately in love, and she felt sure it must be one of Elena's companions, whom she knew to be saucy and merry, but of Elena she never thought, being so innocent and simple.

Gerardo was much comforted, and the nurse's promises filled him full of hope. They agreed that on the next holiday the nurse should stay with the

girls at the windows to discover which one of them was Gerardo's beloved, so that at the proper time and place she might, as the saying is, carry fowls, or play the go-between; and Gerardo, on that particular day, was to pass many times along the canal. This was arranged on a Monday, and, albeit Gerardo felt in perfect health, he nevertheless, at the advice of his father, went to one of the family estates on the mainland, which was about six or seven miles out of Venice. Here he amused himself in various ways until Friday morning, when he returned to Venice.

When the Sunday, so eagerly awaited by the lover and the nurse, came round, Elena's four playmates told her that they meant to join her as usual. But she had already begun to grow somewhat heated with love for the youth, and, since he swooned, had always felt I know not what at her heart, being full of pity for him, taking pleasure in thinking of him, and longing to see him again; so in the best way possible she excused herself. And this she did so that, if, as she hoped, her lover went past, no one should hinder her from seeing him at her leisure.

When the nurse heard that the sisters were not

coming to play with Elena, she was much grieved, not knowing how she should content Gerardo. But seeing that, after dinner, Elena grew restless and ran to the windows a thousand times in the hour, she began to think she must be in love with some young man, and to be more sure of this she said she would like to sleep awhile. Elena was no little pleased, for it gave her greater freedom to stop at the windows, and lovingly she begged the nurse to rest. When she saw the nurse had retired to one room, she at once went to another, so as to start upon her longed-for love-game; and herein fortune favoured her, as she had hardly taken up her post at the window, when Gerardo, who certainly did not sleep, but was most vigilant concerning his matter, began to show himself on the side canal.

The shrewd nurse, who had also taken her stand at another window, when she saw the young man appear in his gondola, turned her eyes to where Elena stood. The girl, seeing her lover, grew very joyous, and with certain childish gestures showed to him her gladness at his recovered health. In her hand she held a bunch of flowers, which, as the gondola went by underneath, with a smiling face

she flung to the young man. The nurse, when she saw this, thought that without a doubt it must be Elena whom Gerardo loved; and, knowing that if they were minded to wed, a marriage between them could most honourably be arranged, she came back suddenly into the room where Elena still stood, looking out at her lover, and said, "What is this, my girl, that I have just seen? What have you to do with that young man who but now passed along the canal? You're a fine modest girl to stand all day long at the windows and throw down nosegays to all who come and go! Woe betide you if ever your father were to know of this! I warrant he would deal with you in such fashion that you would be envious of the dead." At this sharp rebuke the maiden was almost beside herself, knowing not, neither daring to say a word; yet seeing from the nurse's face that, though she had scolded her sharply, she was not really very wrathful, she flung her arms about her neck, and kissing her as a child would do, she said sweetly, "Nena" (so the Venetians call their nurses), "Nena, my sweetest of mothers, I humbly crave your pardon if, in the game you saw me playing at, I erred, though myself I do not think it. Yet, if you would have me live a

happy life, prithee hear what I have to say, and if it seem to you that in playing I was at fault, then give me such chastisement as you think most fitting. You must know that my father used on holidays to ask the four sisters who live over the way to come and play games with me. First of all they taught me the game of forfeits, and then they said that a far more amusing game was to go to the windows, and as young men passed in their gondolas to throw down to them roses, carnations, and the like. This greatly pleased me, and he with whom of all others I chose to play was the youth you saw just now. For my part, I wish he would often go past, and I know not why you scold me for such a game, but if it be wrong I will refrain therefrom."

The nurse could hardly hold back her laughter when she heard how frankly and simply the girl spoke, and determined to bring to a good end this undertaking, begun thus in sport. So she answered Elena thus: "My darling girl, I would have you know that with my own milk I suckled the youth who but now went past. His name is Gerardo, the son of Messer Paolo, who has yonder fine and

spacious palace on the other side of the Grand Canal. I dwelt there more than two years, and this is why I love him as my son, and have always been as one of his household, esteemed and petted by all. His welfare, his honour, and profit I thus desire as much as I do my own, just as I also would have you be happy and content in all things, and would weary myself to serve you and him as much as for any one I know." Then she told the girl of the traps that lie hidden under such love-games, and how simple maidens and other women were tricked and cheated by men, pointing out that every woman, no matter of what degree, ought to value her honour, and ever guard it with all care and diligence. Finally, to reach her point, after setting forth many other things, she said that, if Elena would give up playing this so-called love-game, she would so expedite matters that Gerardo should make her his bride. Though still simple and pure in heart, the girl had a ready wit, and wholly understood all that the nurse had said. Her love for Gerardo awoke and grew stronger, and she told the nurse that she would be content to take him for her husband rather than any other gentleman in Venice.

On getting this propitious answer, the beldame, seizing her opportunity, went to see Gerardo, who was in a mood of alternate hope and fear. When he saw the nurse coming to him with a glad countenance, he took it as a hopeful sign of his purpose being achieved, and affectionately greeting her he said, "Welcome, sweet mother, what good news do you bring to me?" "The best of news, my son," she answered, "if only fortune favour you." And then, from the very outset, she recounted all her talk with Elena, saying at the end that, whenever he was minded to marry her, the maiden was most ready to take him for her husband. Loving the girl passionately as he did, Gerardo was well satisfied to make her his lawful wife, the more so as he knew her to be Messer Pietro's only daughter. So, as best he might, he thanked the nurse, and they then both took counsel together as to the manner and the moment of meeting with Elena, and of bringing all to a good issue by this much-longed-for marriage. When this was done, the nurse went home.

Elena, who had never known love, yet who tasted something within her of its sweetness and fire, when she reflected that in a brief while she would

be her beloved Gerardo's bride, could hardly contain herself for joy, and a desire prompted her to play, when the bridal day came, some game with her lover, the which, though she knew not yet its nature, she deemed most delightful. Fears, on the other hand, seized her, and she grew cold as ice at the thought that she was doing this without the knowledge or the permission of her father; and she dreaded that out of it some great scandal might come. Thus her thoughts made war within her, now hoping, anon fearing, and then saying to herself, "Shall I be thus bold, nay foolhardy even, to dare to do such a thing by stealth?" Then, driving this thought from her, she would argue, "Yet does it not behove me to do all things so that I may have joyous sport with my Gerardo?" So she went on inventing various schemes and making many decisions, the end of all being that she resolved to try and marry her lover, come what might.

The nurse having told her of Gerardo's good intention, she was marvellously contented, and after various talk they agreed to have a great washing one day, when Messer Pietro was away from home. All the servants should help in this work, and at

the fittest time Gerardo was to come there. This being settled, he was duly advised by the nurse as to the right moment to make his visit.

Accordingly, at the time fixed when Messer Pietro was at the Consiglio di Pregadi, Elena and the nurse set all the women-folk in the house to work at washing, and kept them so busy with this that Gerardo, gently pushing the house-door open, came in, and, without being seen by any one, went upstairs to a room of which the nurse had told him. She joined him here ere long, and led him by a little secret stair to a chamber where Elena awaited him. The timid, simple maiden trembled, and, overcome by icy fears, she remained motionless, knowing not what to say. Gerardo likewise, being filled with a supreme joy, yet hardly master of himself, stood speechless for a space; then, taking heart and loosening his tongue, with meet obeisance he tremblingly gave her greeting, when with a blush she bade him welcome. The nurse, seeing the lovers remain silent, laughingly said to them, "It seems to me that you desire to play the mute, but as you both know why you have come here, it were best to lose no time, since it seems to me that your desires should

have honourable fulfilment. See there, at the head of this bed, is the image of our glorious Queen of Heaven, holding her Son, our Saviour, in her arms. Them I pray, as do you also, to grant good beginning, better middle, and best ending to this marriage, which now by words of mouth you conclude."

Then the nurse pronounced the beautiful words which, in accordance with the holy custom of the Roman Catholic Church, are wont to be said at such nuptials, while Gerardo gave to his beloved Elena the ring. Of the joy of this newly wedded pair you may judge when the nurse, seeing that all had been brought to a good end, counselled them to take their fill of pleasure, since they had opportunity to do this. Then she left them and went below, where the washing was going on.

When she thought that the lovers had been long enough together, she returned to their chamber; and they, though not sated, yet wearied, may be, were talking merrily as if to heighten their present joy. It was then arranged that they should fearlessly meet, until the occasion should come for them to proclaim their marriage, here contracted and consummated. After many sweet kisses, Gerardo,

aided and escorted by the sagacious nurse, left his bride and quitted the house unseen, being scarce able to contain himself for the supreme joy that filled his heart.

At her husband's going, Elena was sad, but otherwise had as great happiness as well might be. She deemed herself the gladdest woman in all Venice, and blessed the hour and the instant when first she saw Gerardo. Yet what shall be said of the marvellous might of love? Entering Cimon's breast, it straightway changed him from a rude, ignorant, savage brute, not a man, to one most courteous, gentle, sapient, and humane. So, too, in Elena it wrought a change. As she began to get a taste for the game of love, and as the divine and amorous flames lighted up her heart with their fire, so, too, they soon opened the eyes of her mind, and she became so shrewd and sprightly, yet so sweet and winning in her ways, that, for beauty, grace, and womanly charm, she had few who equalled, and none who excelled her. As the days went by, these goodly qualities increased.

Gerardo, at the very summit now of his content, used to visit his dear wife as often as might be, the nurse helping him; and they both led the

gladdest and most joyous life of any one in the world.

While thus they took their fill of happiness, evil fortune, that leaves no one long in peace, and least of all lovers, prepared for Gerardo and Elena fresh troubles and impediments. For well nigh two years they had lived the happiest of lives together, and now they were to taste the bitterness of misfortune at the hands of Fate, who, if lives be calm and sweet, is the more prone to spoil them suddenly, and without warning.

It was the yearly custom of the Venetian Signory to send certain galleys to Baruti,* and publicly to announce their intention of doing this beforehand, so that those wishing to take such a voyage should, upon making payment to the commonwealth, choose such ships as they best liked.

Messer Paolo, Gerardo's father, being anxious, as good fathers mostly are, that his son should have closer knowledge of trade, and become more familiar with the ways of cities and the dealings of merchants, took one of the galleons in Gerardo's name, at a price, without telling him a word. There was a goodly stock of things which Messer Paolo had

* Beyrout, in Syria.

in his house, and these his son was to take to Baruti, bringing thence other merchandise to Venice. So the father thought to increase not a little the youth's faculty for trading; and, after finding him a wife, he designed to let him manage all the household matters, while he could give all his time to the service of the Signory.

The galleon having been secured, one day after dinner, when the tables were moved, and he was alone with his son, Messer Paolo said, "You know, my son, the goods which we have by us to send to Baruti, and what merchandise has to be brought back from that place. So this morning I have hired a galleon in your name, that you may go out and see the world, and begin henceforth honourably to get worldly wisdom. For nothing sooner sharpens the wits of a man than to see different cities and places, and to learn the ways and customs of this or that nation. Here, in Venice, you will always see that those who have traded in foreign parts in the East, in the West, or elsewhere, when they come home, after doing their business well, are reputed to be shrewd men, full of talent and resource; and these, as I say, you will always see are appointed to divers posts of honour and power under govern-

ment. Such advancement, however, is not for the careless, who all the livelong day stand idle, and spend their time with women of evil life. The voyage to Baruti usually lasts six months, or, at the most, seven. Therefore, my dear son, have all things ready that you need for this journey; and whatever you want, I will provide. When you come back, we will arrange our affairs in such a way as God shall direct."

Messer Paolo thought that his son would gladly answer that he was ready to obey, as he had offered him a voyage no less honourable than useful, but Gerardo, to whom it seemed impossible to live even a day without seeing his love, was greatly grieved in his mind, though he showed nothing of the chagrin and anger which inwardly he felt. "You do not answer me," said his father. "I know not what to say," replied Gerardo, "for I would willingly obey you, but it is impossible to do this, for faring is most harmful to me and contrary. Nay, if I went to sea, it would be as if, willingly, I went to my death; thus I pray you to pardon me, and to accept this, my just excuse, for in sooth I am grieved that I cannot obey you."

Messer Paolo, who never thought to get such an

answer from his son, was greatly amazed and hurt. He tried again to persuade him, now with soft words and now with harsh, but his labour was vain, for the youth would give no other answer than at first. Thus, having risen from table in disaccord, they went, one this way and the other that.

Grieved beyond measure at what had happened, Messer Paolo went to the Rialto to find his son-in-law, a young man, rich, and of noble birth. After much talk, he said to him, "Lionardo" (for so he was named), "I had hired a galleon in which to send Gerardo with certain merchandise of mine to Baruti; but when I spoke to him of this, he made excuses, letting me understand that he cannot go thither. So, if you are willing to go in his place, we need not parley overmuch about it, but you shall have whatever share of the gain you like to name." Lionardo gave his kinsman warm thanks for this offer, and stated his readiness to do whatever he desired; so, there and then, the agreement was made.

Gerardo, for his part, waited until night came, and gave the usual sign to his wife that he wished to bear her company. When in due time he reached her chamber, after the customary greetings and

embracings, they sat down, and Gerardo spoke thus to Elena: "Sweet wife, dearer to me than my own life, it may be that you wonder why I make so great a point of coming to stay with you to-night, seeing that last night I was with you; yet, besides my desire to be always with you, that you will readily have noticed, there is another cause which has brought me hither." Then he told her of all that his father had said to him that morning. Elena listened attentively to her husband's words, and, when he had finished, with a fine tact and breeding, far in advance of her years, she answered, with a piteous sigh, "Alas! and woe is me, dear husband; did I not know by other things of your great love for me than by this news and the deep wound that you have just dealt me! By refusing to obey your father, you close for me every way by which I can ever hope to reach happiness." Here she fell to weeping; her voice was broken with grievous sobs; and when in a measure tears had assuaged the bitterness of her sorrow, she recovered herself, and said, "Alas! my dear one and my life, how deeply have you erred in not promptly obeying your father! Ah! more than thrice wretched me! for though not yet known, not yet seen, I am the cause

of so much harm, dishonour, and bitter pain to my honoured father-in-law! When he knows me, shall he not have good reason to love me little? Will he not call me the discomfort, and (which is worse) the manifest ruin of his house? Indeed, he may well say this. Let me entreat you, and, if you love me, as I believe, my entreaties should avail a thousand-fold, let me pray you to obey your father at all cost, and patiently bear to be absent from my sight for these few months. Therefore, dearest husband, go hence in happiness, remembering me as I shall remember you, for in thought I shall follow you wherever you go, as she who ever desires to live and to die yours. May God forbid that I should prevent your living with your father in that peace and concord which ought ever to exist between you!" Much more was said, but at the last Gerardo let himself be overcome by the just arguments of the wise and prudent damsel, and bidding her farewell with many tears, he went, at the usual hour, to do his business. Then he sat down to dine with his disconsolate father, and when the meal was ended, and all others had gone out, he rose and fell on his knees, uncovering his head, and speaking thus: "Magnificent and honoured father,

I have thought much last night about the voyage to Baruti, of which you spoke to me yesterday; and I clearly see how great was my error in not obeying your prayers, which for me should ever count as commands. Humbly and heartily I ask your pardon for my ignorance and folly, begging you to take no note of my scant reverence towards you, but to be pleased to restore me to your favour. See, O my honoured father, here am I, ready to obey you, and to go, not only to Baruti, but to any other place whither it shall please you to send me; for I have determined to die first rather than again to oppose your wishes."

At these words the kindhearted father bade his son rise, while tears of love and pity filled his eyes. For a while, emotion hindered him from speaking, and, with his arms about Gerardo's neck, he remained silent. The father's grief touched the young man to tears also, yet soon he dried his eyes, and sought to console his father with sweet words. Messer Paolo, having put an end to tears, became exceedingly glad, and sent for his son-in-law, to induce him to let Gerardo sail for Baruti after all, promising to find him another voyage. Lionardo came, and Messer Paolo, in great glee, told him that Gerardo

was minded to sail for Baruti, so he urged him to remain for this time at home, and at the first chance he would provide him with a similar voyage, which, as it happened, he did, soon after. Lionardo was hardly pleased at the news, for he was bent upon the voyage; yet, like a wise youth, he concealed his discontent, and told his father-in-law that he was pleased with what pleased him, and that to oblige him and Gerardo he would willingly do far more than this. Messer Paolo and his son thanked him much for his goodwill, and set themselves to lade the galleon with the goods and furnish it with all that was needed.

But he would have much to do who should seek to tell the tale of those few nights which passed between Gerardo's resolve to go and his going, or to describe how the lovers took their last amorous pleasures and wept bitter tears of farewell, as bitter, may be, as those which sorrowful Fiammetta once shed for Pamfilo. To him who truly loves or has loved I leave it to imagine what he would feel were he in a like case.

When the time for starting came, the seamen loosed the ship from her moorings, and with a fair wind set sail. If Gerardo, as he voyaged,

centred all his thoughts upon his darling wife, so she, too, did the same, having moreover this comfort, that she could speak of her dear husband with the faithful nurse. And if ever she was haunted by any doubt of his love, the good woman consoled her and made her feel sure that Gerardo loved no other woman save herself. With Gerardo it was not thus; the closer he kept his passion shut within his breast, the more it burned and glowed with a great heat. There was no one to whom he might vent his love-troubles; indeed, he had never had the chance of making a confidant. Let us leave him, now, to set out upon his voyage, whence, later, we will bring him back safe and sound.

About six months had passed since Gerardo left Venice; and Elena, who counted over the hours, the days, the weeks, and the months, was hoping for her dear husband's return, rejoicing at the thought of it, every hour of his absence seeming to her as a thousand years. To her faithful nurse she would say, "Only fifteen days more, or twenty at the most, and then my much-longed-for husband will be back in Venice. Besides merchandise, he will bring a thousand pretty things, and when he started he told me that he meant to bring you many goodly

gifts." Thus the loving girl was wont to comfort herself, not aware that a plot was being prepared against her which should bring about infinite sorrow and the utmost grief.

When Messer Pietro saw how his daughter possessed wit and charm beyond her years, and was of singular beauty, thinking, too, that at home she was without female guardianship of the sort that she needed, he determined to marry her, for he feared that something contrary to his wishes might befall: in fact, this had already happened. Nor did it take him long to find a fitting son-in-law, for he, being rich and of noble birth, and his daughter very beautiful and charming, many of his own quality would willingly have become related to him by marriage. Accordingly, from among others he chose a young man who most pleased him in the matters of birth and fortune, and through mutual friends and relatives it was arranged that the next Saturday he should see Elena. If she pleased him, on the following Sunday he should give her the ring, and that same night consummate the marriage. This being decided upon, great preparations were made for the coming wedding, and Messer Pietro told his daughter of that which he had arranged.

At this unlooked-for and woful news (to Elena, as sad as if one had said to her, "To-morrow the Signory will have you hanged in St. Mark's Square, between the two high columns") she became greatly grieved, and in her exceeding anguish could answer nothing. So her father, thinking only that girlish modesty made her thus silent, said nothing more to her, but proceeded to give the necessary orders, so that the wedding should be celebrated in sumptuous fashion, with choice and tempting viands, as might befit his own rank and wealth, as also those of his son-in-law.

Having been seen by her suitor on the Saturday evening, who greatly admired her, Elena at the supper-hour ate little or nothing. The nurse bearing her company, she withdrew to her chamber, where she wept bitterly. Greater lamentation than hers no mortal may conceive, nor could the nurse in any way comfort her, there being as it seemed no way nor outlet of escape from being wedded and bedded on the morrow. And to this, come what might, she resolved never to submit. She dared not reveal her marriage to her father, not from any fear that he would be cruel to her, but because by such disclosure she might peradventure bring hurt

to her Gerardo. That night she was fain to quit the house, and, the nurse helping her, to seek out her father-in-law, and with her arms about his neck, acquaint him with all that had passed between Gerardo and herself. Yet she knew not if this would please her husband. Now, whoever should try to recount, one by one, the thoughts which that night passed through her mind, might as easily count the stars in the night, when the heavens are serene. But be certain that her sorrow was immeasurable and beyond belief. All night long she mourned, never once being able to take rest.

When it was day, the nurse, leaving Elena's chamber, sought to do her household duties, while ever troubled and uneasy in her mind about the despairing girl, being unable to decide upon any expedient that should set her free; and in truth her grief was as great as Elena's.

The hapless damsel, distraught by strange and woful thoughts, had not doffed her attire all night, and, seeing herself now alone, she bolted the chamber door from within, and, dressed just as she was, she got upon her bed, arranging the draperies as decently about her as might be. Then she collected all her thoughts, and her heart for-

bidding her to marry the man proposed by her father, while not knowing when Gerardo would come back, she felt that she could no longer live. Not having the courage to stab nor strangle herself (there being no poison at hand), she held her breath as long as possible, until overcome likewise by grief, she presently swooned and lay there as one dead. As none was near to bring her help, her senses were like to have left her altogether.

The time for rising being come, the nurse went to dress Elena, and to her surprise found the chamber door locked, whereupon she knocked several times loudly, but got no answer. Messer Pietro, hearing the noise, came to the room, and after beating a long while at the door, they broke it down by main force. The father and others entered the room, and on opening the windows they all saw the hapless Elena lying, dressed, upon her bed, like a corpse. Then there was loud lamenting, and the wretched father fell to weeping, till his piteous cries reached heaven; while the nurse, howling and screaming like a madwoman, flung herself upon the body. Indeed, there was no one in the house who did not weep bitterly. They sent for the doctors, and the new bridegroom and his kinsfolk were also summoned.

Many things were done, and countless remedies tried, in order to bring Elena back to her senses; but all was in vain. The nurse, being closely questioned, said that Elena had been greatly troubled all night long, tossing from side to side, as if sick of some deadly fever, and that, on leaving the room, her mistress was awake. She felt inwardly certain, she said, that the girl had died suffocated with infinite grief; and then she fell to loud weeping again, and could not be comforted. The disconsolate father also wept sore, saying such things as would have moved stones to pity, much rather men.

After a thousand remedies had been tried, the doctors, seeing that nothing served to revive the girl, gave it as their opinion that she had died of apoplexy, brought on by a subtle catarrh, which had passed from the head to the heart. Accordingly, as all now held her to be dead, it was arranged that in the evening she should be honourably borne by her peers to the sepulchre at Castello, and laid in the marble tomb of her ancestors, outside the church. Thus, amid the general weeping of all who knew her, the hapless Elena was buried. See, now, what strange accidents at times befall, and bear in mind that no happiness is ever com-

plete without some sorrow being mingled therewith; there is, moreover, at times so much wormwood blended with the honey, that the sweetness of the pleasure may not be tasted.

On that very day, Gerardo was to have reached the Lido, near Venice, with his vessel. Right happily had he made his voyage; indeed, he could have desired no more; and he came back very rich. In Venice it is a praiseworthy custom that, when vessels or galleons return from long voyages, and specially when their business has been honourably despatched, the friends and relatives of those on board ship go out to meet them, and give them greeting upon their safe and prosperous return. Many citizens, therefore, both old and young, went to welcome Gerardo at his home-coming, and he himself was the gladdest of them all, not because that he returned wealthy and with his business successfully done, but because he looked forward to seeing his darling wife again, whom he loved and desired beyond all else in the world. He knew not, alas! that at the very hour of his landing she was being laid in the tomb, which may show how often thoughts deceive us.

The galleon reached the Lido when it was

evening, just as Elena's funeral obsequies were almost ended, and against the sky the voyagers saw the flare of torches that gave a lurid splendour to the night. They asked the friends who met them what all those lights might mean at such an hour. Many of the young men knew of Elena's hapless story, and they told how the ill-fated girl was to have been married that morning, but was found dead in her chamber, and how that doubtless her burial was now taking place. At this mournful news, those who heard it were filled with pity for the poor girl, but Gerardo, more than they all, was so overwhelmed with grief, and felt such a stab at his heart, that he could hardly keep back his tears, or forbear to show the inward sorrow that consumed him. Yet so far was he master of himself that he kept calm, and, quitting his friends on the galleon as soon as might be, he straightway went on by boat to Venice, being resolved on no account to survive his beloved Elena. It was his firm belief that she had poisoned herself rather than wed the man chosen for her as husband by her father. But before he took poison, or put an end to his life by some other means (indeed, as to this he was undecided), he resolved to open the tomb

where Elena lay dead, and then, after looking upon her, he would die by her side.

Yet not knowing how to break open the tomb alone, he thought of taking the boatswain of the galleon into his confidence, he being his intimate friend, and to reveal to him the story of his love. So, calling him aside, he told him of all that had passed between Elena and himself, and that which he intended to do, saying nothing, however, about his wish to die. So far as he could, the boatswain sought to dissuade him from trying to break open tombs, and thereby bring about a scandal; but seeing that he was firm in his resolve, he expressed his willingness to do his bidding, and not to forsake him, but to share with him one same fate.

So they two, without other company, took a boat, and leaving a man whom they had chosen in charge of the galleon, they went to Venice and landed at the boatswain's house. Here they provided themselves with tools apt for their purpose, and then taking boat again, they proceeded to Castello. It was about midnight when they opened the sepulchre and raised the lid. Entering the tomb, Gerardo flung himself straightway upon his wife's body,

and whoever had seen them then could scarcely have said which of the two was a corpse. Anon, recovering himself, he bathed his lady's face with bitter tears, and covered it with kisses. The boatswain, fearing to be caught at such work by the officers of the night-watch, besought Gerardo to come out of the tomb, but he could not, being well-nigh beside himself with grief. Forced by his friend at last to go, despite the boatswain's remonstrances, he would fain carry away his wife with him, so lifting her up, they shut the tomb and bore her body to the boat. There Gerardo lay down again by Elena's side, nor could he take his fill of kisses and embracements. But when the boatswain sharply scolded him for his folly in trying to take the body he knew not where, he at last listened to his true counsel, and resolved to place it again in the tomb. Accordingly they turned the boat's head about, and made for Castello.

As they went, Gerardo, who could not refrain from caressing his dear wife, suddenly felt some movement in her, and said to the boatswain, "My dear friend, I feel something I know not what in her which makes me hope that she is not yet dead." Mindful of the strange changes that often-

times befall, the boatswain thought that this might be, and laying his hand on the girl's left breast, he felt it to be yet warm, while the heart beat faintly. "Master," said he to Gerardo, "feel here, and see that she is not altogether dead." At this glad news, Gerardo, full of joy, placed his hand on her heart, whose beating ever increased, nature being desirous to call back the living spirit that had strayed. Then he said to his companion, "Of a truth she lives; say now, what shall we do?" "We shall do well," rejoined the boatswain, "so do you be of good cheer, and fear not, but that all shall be provided for. On no account must we take her back to the tomb; let us go to my house, which is not far off, and there I have my mother, who is a woman aged in years, and wise withal."

So they went to the boatswain's house, and knocked loudly till they were heard. The boatswain was soon recognised, for at the first time of his coming his mother had heard nothing of his entry. She was overjoyed at her son's return, and straightway made the servant bring a light and open the door. Embracing his mother, the boatswain sent the maid away on an errand, when in her absence they carried Elena into a spacious room, and laid

her, undressed, in an excellent bed. Then having lighted a fire at which they heated linen cloths, they rubbed and chafed the girl gently with these, never ceasing until she began to get back her lost senses and revive, when she muttered a few broken words. Then opening her eyes, by degrees she recovered her sight, and recognised Gerardo; but not wholly revived as yet, she knew not if what she saw was real or if it was a dream. At these plain signs of returning life, Gerardo tenderly embraced his darling wife, and for sheer joy shed hot tears. When Elena came to herself, and heard how she had been buried and brought forth from the tomb, she nearly swooned again, half from terror and half from delight. Those who should here essay to tell of the lovers' gladness and contentment would fall into grievous error, for not even a thousandth part of such consummate joy could they justly express. She being now revived, they fed the girl with new-laid eggs, pistachios, sweetmeats, and very precious malmsey wine. And as now the dawn drew near, they all begged Elena to rest, and with sweet sleep regain her strength. So she lay down, and soon lightly slumbered, having slept no whit that night, and still less the night before.

The new day had come as they left her to repose, and Gerardo sent back the boatswain to the galley, while he himself took a gondola and went to his father's house. Being already risen, the old man with great gladness embraced his son, who told him of his happy and prosperous voyage, and how in selling the merchandise at Baruti he had made a great profit, his gain being no less by that cargo which he had brought home. At hearing all this, his father was right well content, and blessed his son a thousand times. That morning Gerardo dined with his parents at his home, and their joy was very great. After the meal, he waited a while, until he could bring his galleon into Venice, and do all that had to be done. Then, taking the boatswain, he went to see his Elena, with whom he supped joyously.

When morning came, he took counsel with his faithful friend as to the best means of guarding Elena. After many schemes, Gerardo decided that, until the marriage could be made public, the easiest and most honourable way would be for her to remain with his brother-in-law, Lionardo. Accordingly the next day Gerardo dined at his sister's with Lionardo and his wife, and afterwards bid

them come into a room apart, he having something to tell them in secret. When they were all three alone, he spoke as follows :—

"Most noble brother-in-law, and you, my dearest sister, the reason for my summoning you hither is of the utmost importance for me; and I need secrecy and help. I know how much you love me, and that to get you to do me a favour, ceremonious speech, such as I might use to strangers, is needless, so let me come to the facts."

Then, from first to last, he told them the whole story of his love, and of the dreadful mischance which had befallen his wife, who now was in safety at the boatswain's house. And he said how glad he would be if they would take her under their roof, keeping her there until the marriage could be made public, since he knew of no other place where she might more honourably and safely stay, if not in their hands. Lionardo and his wife were greatly amazed as they heard of Elena's strange and perilous adventure, it seeming to them as if he told them a fable. But being certain that all was indeed the truth, they most willingly agreed to undertake the guardianship of the girl. So they went together in

a gondola to fetch Elena from the boatswain's house, and bring her to their own home.

What shall we say then of the disconsolate nurse? Knowing that Gerardo had returned, she dared not see him, so great was her grief for the loss of her beloved Elena. It was not long before Messer Paolo began to speak to his son about finding him a wife; but Gerardo always made some excuse, saying that he was still young, and that the time had not yet come for him to bind himself with the close knot of marriage. It seemed to him fittest that in freedom he should enjoy his youth, just as his father had done, who, when he married, was much older in years than he. Some days went by as thus they disputed, while on most nights Gerardo enjoyed the pleasant company of his dear wife.

Though aware of Gerardo's nightly absence from home, Messer Paolo knew not where he went to sleep, and doubted not but that he had traffic with some courtezan or woman of evil life, and that for this cause he did not care to marry. To remove such suspicion, and indeed to compass his desire as a watchful parent to see his son married, one day he called Gerardo and spoke thus to him:—

"As, now, I want this consolation before I die, to see you happily married, tell me truly, my son, if you are minded to please me in this matter or no, so that I may settle that which I mean to do. If you wish for a wife, and she be suitable to you, I am pleased to let you choose her as you like. But if this be not your desire, by the evangels of St. Mark, I will make one of Lionardo's boys my son, and leave you of my fortune not a groat."

When Gerardo saw his father's troubled visage, it seemed to him that he could no longer hide the truth, so he briefly told him of his marriage with Elena, of her swooning, and of her glad return to life and health.

On hearing what his son told him, Messer Paolo thought he dreamed a dream, and could hardly believe the tale. But when he saw that his son spoke truly and with certainty, he said that next day, when dinner was over, he would go to see Elena, and so be assured of the truth. He forgave Gerardo for marrying without his permission—a permission that now he was not slow to grant. That day Gerardo went back to his wife, and told her and his brother-in-law of what they had spoken, and of their mutual decision.

Next day, Messer Paolo and Gerardo went together, without other companions, to see Elena. They were hardly come inside the door when Elena, running swiftly down the staircase, threw herself at Messer Paolo's feet and, weeping, besought his forgiveness if, while as yet unknown to him, she had caused him trouble and pain. The kind-hearted old man, when he saw his beautiful daughter-in-law, was touched to tears, and bidding her rise, he kissed her and gave her his blessing, and took her to him as his beloved daughter. Then, mounting the stairs, they all stayed a while with Lionardo, and Messer Paolo could never take his fill of talking with Elena, so sweet was she in manner and so ready of wit.

A very beautiful festival was shortly to be held at one of the churches near his house, and on this day Messer Paolo was desirous that the nuptials should be held, and that Elena in rich vestments should attend Mass, and afterwards be brought home with honour. All arrangements having been made, many ladies were bidden to the marriage, who were told that the bride was a foreigner. Gerardo also invited his trusty friend, the boatswain, who knew all, besides several most noble gentlemen, and they

all believed the bride to be from abroad. Accordingly, on the day fixed, Elena was brought with great pomp and ceremony to the church, where she attended Mass, and all who saw her judged her to be the most lovely damsel in Venice. In fact, her beauty won universal admiration.

It chanced that her affianced husband (to whom Elena's father had thought to give her as wife) was at the church with his dear friend; and as they watched the bride and praised her beauty, they remarked her marvellous resemblance to the Elena who was dead, and, gazing more intently upon her, it seemed as if they fain would devour her with their eyes. She, noting this, soon recognised them, and could hardly keep from smiling, as she turned her face away, which made the two young men feel sure that the bride was indeed Elena and no other. Leaving the church, they went all the way to the Patriarchate, where they prevailed upon the Patriarch to let them open the tomb in which Elena had been buried. Finding there neither bone nor body, the young men raised a great outcry, and, returning to the church where the marriage was going on, they were for taking Elena away, one of them saying that her father

had given her to him as his bride. High words followed, and Gerardo swore to meet his rival with sword and shield in one of the squares of Venice, but this coming to the knowledge of the Council of Ten, the combat was forbidden, and they decided that the law should settle the dispute. The suitor could only allege that the damsel had been promised to him by her father, whereas Gerardo had the nurse's proof that he had wedded Elena and consummated the marriage. When the damsel herself confirmed this statement, the court pronounced her to be Gerardo's true and lawful wife. Messer Pietro was absent from Venice at the time, and hearing the news, and knowing Gerardo to be a young man both noble and rich, he welcomed him as if he were his own son. Thus did the good Gerardo prosper and become exceeding rich, living for a long while in peace and joy with his dear Elena, being often mindful of the misfortunes through which they had passed, together with the trusty nurse, their happiness ever increasing as the years went by.

HOW Signor Didaco Centiglia, having wedded a damsel, grows weary of her, and how at her hands he meets his death.

VALENCIA, in Spain, is deemed a most noble and pleasant city, where, as Genoese merchants have often told me, beautiful and gracious women abound, who by their charms have such power to captivate men that in all Catalonia no more voluptuous city exists. Indeed, if by chance they should happen upon some inexperienced youth, they give him such a trimming that, as cunning barbers, not the Sicilians themselves can beat them. Here, in this city, was the home of the Centigli, a house long famed for its many noble and opulent scions. One of these, Didaco by name, lived there not many years ago. He was twenty-three years of age, and very wealthy. He ranked as the most liberal and courteous of all the knights of Valencia, and it was he who at bull-fights, tourneys, and other festivals made the bravest show. Meeting one day a damsel of

low degree, yet of great beauty and unusual charm, he fell passionately in love with her. The girl had a mother, and two brothers, who were goldsmiths, while she herself broidered stuffs with admirable skill. The knight, who so burned with love that he had neither happiness nor rest save when he thought of her or spoke with her, used often to pass by in front of the house, and with messages and letters importune her. Pleased beyond measure to be thus wooed by the first nobleman of the town, she gave to his pleadings neither too much heed nor too little regard, holding him, as it were, between the two. He, who craved other food than mere words and glances, fell ever deeper in love, hoping to achieve his end with gold. At length he was able to persuade the damsel to grant him an interview wherever it pleased her best, he pledging his word of honour that she should receive no harm nor insult at his hands. The girl told all to her mother, who, yielding to entreaty, agreed to allow the lover to hold the desired interview at her house. Having gained thus much, the knight came thither, and in the mother's presence spoke at much length with Violante, for so the damsel was named. Yet, though he was eloquent, and in fact a fine spokes-

man, and though he made many promises to both mother and daughter, offering to pay, not only a good sum of money now, but also, if the girl should marry, to give her a suitable and handsome dowry, from Violante he got no other answer save this, that she was greatly indebted to him for the love that he said he bore for her, and that in matters honourable she would readily oblige him, but that she was firm in her resolve to die rather than to lose her good name. And with many words the mother upheld her daughter's decision.

The luckless lover, good-natured as he was, when he perceived that by no arts that he might use could he win Violante for his mistress, resolved to make her his wife. He saw that she had beauty, grace, pleasant manners, and was endowed with every charm, and he judged that, though of base lineage, if he took her to wife, she might rank with the noblest dames of Valencia. Moreover, he bethought him that he had neither father nor mother who could cry out at his bringing to them such a kinswoman. Then, too, he was spurred on to this choice by the great love which he bore for Violante; and this made him feel in duty bound to wed her, since the main thing in this world is

to content oneself; and though in buying a horse a friend's judgment will serve, when it comes to choosing a wife it is best to take one after one's own heart.

He also remembered to have heard that, not long since, a King of Aragon espoused the daughter of one of his vassals. Thus, after much thought, being unable to overcome his great love, which, as it seemed to him, grew ever stronger, he at length declared his resolve by saying, "Signora Violante, in order that you may know my love for you to be true, and that the words I spoke came from my heart, if you will be mine, so long as I live I will be yours, and I will make you my lawful wife." Hearing this, the mother and her daughter grew joyful, and thanked God for His bounty in giving them such good fortune. And Violante modestly replied—

"Signor Didaco, although I know myself to be unworthy of such a cavalier as yourself, you being of ancient lineage and one of the great nobles of the land, whereas I am but of poor and base parentage, yet to requite honourably your honourable love, I will always be to you a loyal consort and a faithful servant." In this fashion, then, it was

agreed that the knight should wed Violante in the presence of her mother and her brothers. The nobleman was well pleased with the compact, and soon after, having kissed the damsel's hand, he returned to his home.

Violante's mother lost no time in telling her sons of all that had been arranged with Signor Didaco, whereupon the two young men rejoiced greatly, as it seemed to them a fine thing that their sister should make such a grand match, without their having to give her a dowry. Two days had not passed before the knight returned, and then in the presence of the mother and the two brothers, as well as of a trusted servant, whom he brought with him, he solemnly took his beloved Violante to wife. He besought them all, however, to keep the marriage a secret until such time as he could make it public, there being certain reasons for this concealment. Having wedded his bride, he passed the night in her company, and the marriage was duly consummated to their mutual content.

For more than a year his love for Violante remained steadfast, and almost every night he came to her bed. He provided her with rich dresses and jewels, giving to her brothers a handsome sum

of money. This caused many who were ignorant of the actual facts to think that the knight had bought the girl's love, and took his pleasure of her as of a mistress, and this seemed to them more likely to be true, when they saw how frequent were his visits to her house, and how thoroughly at home he appeared to be there. The girl, though she heard somewhat of all this gossip, gave to it no heed, knowing how matters really stood, and hoping before long to announce her marriage, thus undeceiving every one. The mother and the brothers shared this hope, and often urged Violante to persuade her husband to make the marriage public. And when he came to her she repeatedly besought him to fulfil his promise to take her back with him to his home. This he said he would do, but made no further sign of keeping his word.

Thus a year had passed since the secret marriage, when the knight, being either ashamed of Violante's plebeian origin, or tired of her, began to pay court to a daughter of Signor Ramiro Vigliaracuta, a member of one of the first families in Valencia. The courtship continued in this way for some time, until a dowry had been mutually agreed upon, when the knight publicly wedded this lady of high degree.

The event became known throughout Valencia, and when on that very day Violante heard the news, she was as one stunned, for, needless to say, it troubled her much. She loved him who was her lord and master with an ardent and illimitable love, and now, after hoping for so long to win for herself a place of honour in the world, but finding herself despised, no way seemed open to her that might bring comfort. At nightfall the two brothers came home, who had also heard of this new marriage, and finding their sister disconsolate and weeping bitterly they tried their best, as also did the mother, to calm her and to make her refrain from tears. Yet she, being mindful only of her great sorrow, paid no heed to their exhortations, but with sighs and bitter lamenting bewailed her disgrace.

So, for well nigh three days, she remained in this state, neither eating nor sleeping, and wasting gradually away. When forced at length by nature to take food and rest, she began to perceive that weeping availed naught, and, being loth to submit to the shame which Signor Didaco had brought upon her, she bethought herself of some scheme of vengeance which should make others bear a part of the punishment—vengeance meet for such villainy,

so that for the future it should be less easy for men to betray unfortunate women. And, while disclosing nothing to any one of her fell purpose, she waited for some opportune moment when the knight should fall into her hands. Being resolved to wreak her vengeance upon him, she brooded over the way that this could best be done, and she resolved to give up grieving, and lead as merry a life as might be.

In the house with her there lived a slave, a tall powerful woman of about thirty years of age, who was greatly attached to Violante, having nursed her as a child. She could not bear to see the girl scorned after this fashion, and sincerely condoled with her in her sorrow. It was to this woman that Violante proposed to reveal her plan, knowing that by herself she could not accomplish that which had to be done. Moreover, there was no one more fitted to help, so she told the slave of her cruel scheme, who not only consented to be a partner thereto, but highly praised her for inventing it. Having both settled that which they meant to do, they only waited for an opportunity; and as they say, opportunity is the mother of all things.

A fortnight had hardly passed since the cavalier

had married his second wife, when one day, while out riding, he went by Violante's house. She was at the window, as if greatly surprised at not seeing the knight for so long in this part of the town. When she saw him, she blushed deeply, and waited to hear what he would say. The nobleman, when aware of her presence, also changed colour somewhat, but putting a bold face on matters reined up his steed, and with a bow called out, "Good morrow, my lady! How goes it with you? It seems a year since I saw you."

At this the girl smiled, and replied, "You give me good day with your lips, but in truth you have already given me a very sad day; and how it goes with me you know as well as I. But God guard you, since it cannot be otherwise. You have forsaken me for good and all; and then you say that it seems a year since you saw me! It is plain to me that you no longer care for me, and I fain would tell you that this was my constant fear, for I was not so blind nor so witless as not to perceive that my base birth could never sort with your exalted rank. Yet I pray you still to be mindful of me and to remember that I am, and always shall be, yours."

When the knight heard this and saw that Violante made no further protest, he thought he had got a cheap bargain, and replied, "That which I have done, my lady, I was obliged to do, in order to make a lasting peace between my family and the Vigliaracuta, instead of a bloody feud, and by this marriage all has now been set right; yet this will not cause me to forsake you, but whatever may be of benefit to you, that I will gladly do with all my heart, and be sure that my love for you is in no wise changed." To which Violante answered, "I shall take note if at times you choose to find enjoyment in my company."

The knight assured her that this was his intention; and he had hardly gone fifty paces past the house when, summoning his trusty servant, who knew all, he said to him, "Go back and tell Signora Violante that, if it put her to no trouble, in proof of my love and regard for her, I will come to-night and stay with her for a while." The servant brought this message to Violante, who seemed to be greatly delighted at the news. She saw that her plan began to shape itself in the way she wished, and she at once called the slave, to whom she gave orders for the achievement of her design.

When night came, Signor Didaco supped with his bride and stayed for some time, until, she being willing, he took leave of her. Then he dismissed all his servants except the one who knew the secret, and went to Violante's house, where he was gladly welcomed. The servant, having accompanied his master thus far, found lodging at a neighbouring inn. The hour was late, and the lovers soon sought their couch, conversing much about the new marriage, the girl being apparently desirous of nothing, save that the knight should care for her in the future. And he, who really loved her, for she was very beautiful, made large promises that he would always keep her as his minion. Then the knight, who was weary, fell into a sound sleep.

Seeing this, Violante rose silently from the bed, and opening the chamber door let in the slave, who was waiting outside. Together they took a rope which had been got ready, and fortune so far favoured them that, before he was ware of it, they had bound the wretched knight with a thousand adamantine knots. Then, as he woke, dazed from sleep, the two audacious women thrust a gag into his mouth, so that he could not call out for help. There was in the room a beam which served as a

prop for the floor above; and to this beam they tightly bound the knight, he standing on his feet, all naked as at the day of his birth. The fiendish slave then fetched a sharp knife, a pair of small pincers, and other instruments for cutting. What fears and anguish must then have seized the unhappy knight as he saw these two women display such deadly tools and eagerly prepare for their work, just as a butcher in the slaughter-house prepares to rip off the skin from an ox! Verily I think he must have felt greatly grieved that ever he offended Violante; but to repent too late avails naught—that is, with men, though with God, so I have often heard it said, heartfelt repentance ever avails much.

The young man being thus bound, Violante, grown desperate, took the pincers, and with them seized her trembling victim's tongue, exclaiming, "Ah! false, perfidious, base, and cruel knight, whose wicked conduct makes you no longer knight, but the vilest of men, how sorry am I that, publicly, in the sight of the whole city, I cannot wreak on you that vengeance which your villainy deserves! Yet I will so punish you that you shall be an example to those who, coming after, will take

care how they cheat simple incautious maids, and remember that, when of their own will they have done a thing before God, they must keep their word. Traitor, do you forget that here, in this place, with a pretence of words, you gave me the wedding-ring, and with further false speeches robbed me of my honour? See, yonder, faithless one, is the nuptial-bed that you so lightly have stained with infamy. Ah me! how many lies, all told to my cost, has not this false tongue spoken! Yet, God be praised, it shall deceive no one more!"

So saying, with a pair of shears, she cut off more than four inches of his tongue. Then seizing his hand with the pincers, she cried, "O traitor of traitors! why, with this hand, did you give me the nuptial ring? Why did you wed me? Why, too, were these arms clasped about my neck, if they were afterwards to offer to another an unlawful ring?" With this she cut off the tips of all his fingers; then, taking a sharp dagger, she looked into his eyes, and said, "I know not what to say of you, oh! traitorous eyes, that once were the tyrants of my own. You met my gaze with an infinite tenderness, a love that seemed

immense—a burning desire always to please me. Where are those false tears that you fain would have had me think you shed for my sake? How often were you at pains to make me think that you could look on no beauty but mine, since mine was matchless, the very mould and mirror of all that was gracious and lovely? Ah! let your false light be now put out!" So saying, she thrust the sharp dagger into both his eyes, so that they might never again behold the light of the sun. Then she cut off other parts of his body with her gleaming knives, and after this turned to his heart.

Owing to these wounds the hapless knight was now more dead than alive; and, though he writhed in agony, it availed nothing, they having bound him so tightly to the beam. An awful sight in truth was this, to see a strong man thus tortured, with his limbs torn, and powerless to save himself, or to cry for mercy! Violante, being now wearied rather than appeased by the cruel revenge that she had taken upon her faithless husband, spoke thus to him who, it may be, could not hear, "Didaco, such revenge as was possible for me to take I have taken upon you, though it was not that which you deserved, for your sin should have been punished in the sight of

all people with burning flames. It is your boast at least to have died by the hand of a woman whom you loved, and who loved you with a love that had no limit. What befalls me matters little, but if it had been possible I would willingly have died at your hands. Since this cannot be, God will do with me that which seems to Him fittest. I will torture you no longer." Hereupon she plunged the bloody knife up to the hilt three times in his heart, when the wretched man, shuddering, expired.

Then the women wiped up the blood that had been spilled upon the floor, and, having untied the corpse, they placed it, with all the mutilated limbs, in a large basket, which they covered over with a linen cloth and put under the bed. Violante then turned to Giannica the slave, and said, "Giannica, I can never thank you enough for the help that you have given me in carrying out my longed-for revenge, which, without you, I could never have accomplished. Now that my great desire is appeased, all that remains for me is to provide for your safety, while at the same time I make it plain to the world in what way I revenged myself; so that I am desirous for you to leave me, and to find some means of going to Africa; and this will be easy

enough, for I will give you money to travel thither in comfort, and you will always keep me in your memory." Then, opening a coffer, she said, "I have here much money, with gold and jewels worth over fifteen hundred ducats; take them all, for I give them to you gladly; lose no time in saving yourself. I will keep the thing hidden for the whole day, and will wait until you have made good your escape."

Hearing these kind words, the slave began to weep bitterly, and would on no account consent to leave Violante, declaring that she would share her fate, whatever it might be, and that love for her mistress made her careless of life. She could not be persuaded to go; and Violante, seeing that her efforts were in vain, and that the slave wished to die with her, proposed that they should sleep there in the room during the short space of night that still remained.

When morning came, Violante again besought Giannica to flee, but in vain. Some while before midday the servant of the unfortunate knight came, as was his custom, to accompany his master to the house of the bride. When Violante saw him, she said—

"If you would know where your lord has gone, go and bring hither, if it please you, his Highness the Viceroy, for I am commissioned to tell the news to him and to none other. It will be a vain task for you to try and learn the truth in any other way."

The servant went out, and meeting by chance the knight's uncle and cousin, he told them what Violante had said. They knew of Didaco's love for the girl, but not of the marriage, for the servant had been strictly charged to reveal this to no one. The two relatives never thought that a dreadful deed had been done, but went on together to see Violante, who met them with a smiling face, and said, "My lords, whom do you seek?" and they replied, "We would have you tell us whither Signor Didaco has gone."

"Pardon me, my lords, but I may not disobey his order; bring hither the Viceroy, and you shall know all, for so he charged me to act." At that time the Viceroy was my Lord Duke of Calabria, son of King Frederick of Aragon, who died at Torsi in France. "It is not convenient," said these gentlemen, "that my lord the Viceroy should come hither." "Then do you see to it,"

answered Violante, "that either he come here, or that he send for me."

Being unable to get more news from the girl than this, they went to inform the Viceroy. Violante, who, with her accomplice, foresaw all that was likely to happen, donned forthwith her richest and most sumptuous robes, making Giannica do the same, and then awaited the coming of a messenger from the Viceroy. Her mother, seeing the two gentlemen arrive, had asked Violante what this might mean, who put her off with a false tale, saying not a word as to the crime. Soon there came a sergeant from the Viceroy, who commanded Violante to appear before him. She, who expected this summons, told nothing to her mother, but straightway went with Giannica to speak to the Viceroy, who at that time had with him most of the lords and gentlemen of the land. When she had arrived, after the usual salutation, the Viceroy asked Violante what it was that Signor Didaco had charged her to say concerning him. Then the girl spoke, not as some timid sorrowful woman might speak, but with spirit and a bold front, giving answer thus—

"My Lord Viceroy, you must know that more than

a year since Signor Didaco Centiglia, seeing that by no other way could he have my love, resolved to make me his wife, and in the presence of my mother, my brothers, and Pietro his servant, who is now here, wedded me at my own home, and for more than fifteen months shared my couch as my lawful husband. Then he, regardless of the fact that I was his lawful wife, only lately, as all Valencia knows, espoused the daughter of Signor Ramiro Vigliaracuta, though wife of his she is none, seeing that I was first legally married to him. Nor did this suffice him, for, as if I had been his trull and common harlot, yesterday he impudently visits me and pours out a flood of lies into my ear, being at pains to make me believe that what was black was white. Hardly had he gone, than he sent Pietro, whom you see here, to tell me that he would spend the night now past in my company. To this, as Pietro can testify, I agreed, for the way seemed now open for me to take such revenge upon him as I was able. Therefore, O most just Viceroy, have I come here, that you may know all from my lips. With denials and entreaties I have nothing to do, deeming it too great a piece of cowardice to fear punishment for an act done wilfully and delibe-

rately. Thus, by boldly and frankly confessing the truth, I shall protect my reputation, so that those who in the past had no reason to think ill of me, may now know surely and certainly that I was Signor Didaco Centiglia's lawful wife, and not his harlot. That my honour is safe suffices me, come what may. Last night, my Lord Viceroy, helped by this slave here, and spurred thereto by the injury received, I took such revenge upon my husband as seemed to me meet for the wrong which out of all reason he did me, since it was not I who was the offender; and with these hands I drove out from his vile body his viler soul. He took my honour; I have taken his life; yet how far more honour should be esteemed than life is all too plain."

Then she told exactly the manner in which she had murdered Didaco, and how she had tried to prevail upon the slave to escape.

At the recital of this tragedy, all the lords and gentlemen present were deeply moved, judging the woman to have greater courage than is wont to belong to her sex. The knight's pitiable corpse was exposed in a tower, presenting a hideous sight to all who viewed it. Violante's mother, the brothers, and the servant were in turn examined, when it

was found of a truth the nobleman had no right to wed his second wife. After a strict and careful inquiry, Violante and Giannica were alone found guilty, and they were publicly beheaded. They went joyously to their death, as if going to some festival; and, as report has it, the slave, being careless for herself, besought her mistress to meet death calmly, since thus nobly had she gotten her revenge.

OF the divers mischances and grievous perils which befell Cornelio for the love of his lady.

AMONG those Lombard fugitives who came on to Mantua after the famous defeat of the Swiss at Melegnano * was Messer Cornelio. With myself he took up his abode in that city. It is a pleasure to me, having all good cause for it, to speak of him as a most noble and gallant young gentleman of about four-and-twenty, tall, well-made, and of great strength and comeliness. He had his full share of virtues; while, in the gifts of fortune, he was passing rich. His mother, who lived in Milan, and took the utmost pains to save his patrimony intact, always sent him all that he needed, so that he could keep a house in Mantua, and was well

* The battle of Marignano, fought on September 13, 1515, when Francis I. completely routed the Switzers, and in fact decided the fate of the Duchy of Milan, which Maximilian Sforza had so miserably governed. Marshal Trivulzio termed it "a combat of giants," in which the very flower of the French nobility took part.

furnished with clothes, and horses, and serving-folk. Before leaving Milan he fell in love, as lads will do, with a young married lady of high birth and great beauty, whom, that no scandal touch her, we will call Camilla. As a zealous partisan of the Sforzas, when Maximilian Cæsar came, Cornelio had done all he possibly could to recapture his fatherland, and he was still in close relationship with Duke Francesco Sforza, often going to Trent, and scheming ceaselessly to bring about the Duke's return to Milan. But with all these plottings and schemings he could never forget his mistress. Indeed, she was in his thoughts by day as by night, and it grieved him far more not to be with her nor see her face than to be banished from Milan.

This Camilla whom Cornelio thus passionately loved was but a girl, not yet one-and-twenty; and of all the beauties in Milan, she was held to be the fairest. And though this mutual liking had led to no grave consequences, Cornelio's long devotion, and the absolute truth and sincerity of his love, caused her to repay this heartily; so she herself was grieved beyond measure at his going, and often bemourned his absence. They had not

yet had the chance to speak freely of their loves, but by means of the man who drove her carriage they had often written to each other. The driver was very willing to do their bidding in this, as he had long been in the service of Cornelio's mother. Indeed, had chance favoured them, the lovers would very readily have compassed their desires.

While Cornelio thus lived in Mantua, not as an outlaw, but in great affluence and honour, it happened that a gentlewoman of the city fell desperately in love with him, apprising him indirectly of her deep affection. To the waiting-woman who brought these love-messages he replied with a sigh, "My good woman, you can tell your mistress that I am under great obligations to her for her courteous tenders of affection, knowing that I am loved by her beyond any merit that is mine. It pains me much that I cannot return her the same, but I am not free to dispose of myself at will, having plighted my troth to another, and, being so bound, cannot loose myself. Of a truth, if I were my own, not another's, I would be hers without fail. Her beauty and engaging manners seem to me worthy of all honour and service, not only at my hands, but at the hands of those far greater than

myself. Nevertheless, if she would command my life or my worldly goods, they are at her disposal; these I offer willingly, provided that I fail not in my constancy to her for whom I live and die."

The messenger brought back this answer verbatim to her mistress; and, dear ladies, you may easily imagine how bitter was her chagrin at being thus refused, if you will only put yourselves in her place. She was a damsel of about six or seven-and-twenty years, to whom the greatest gentlemen in Mantua had paid court, yet, as I afterwards knew for certain, had never loved any one before our friend Cornelio inspired her with such fervent affection.

Touching this, let me tell you what I said to him upon my return from Trent. When he had recounted the whole story, I said, "My good Cornelio, forgive my excessive frankness, but our brotherly friendship emboldens me to say as much and more if occasion serves. You say that in Milan you have fallen deeply in love, which I believe, for I know how soft of heart are the ladies of Milan, and how prone they are to love. But think you that your mistress differs in aught from other women, or that if, in your absence, she

came across any man that pleased her she would hesitate to get such solace as fortune had chanced to offer her? Be sure that there is not a woman on earth who, having an opportunity to amuse herself with a man she likes, omits to profit by it, if only the thing may be done in secret. As you know, I have many relatives in Milan, the Bossa family being both numerous and ancient. Now, I believe my sisters and the rest of my kinsfolk to be made of flesh and blood, like any other women with whom I have had dealings. Compared with you, I am an old man, so that I have tried a good many. Women, my friend, are women all the world over, generally doing that which belongs to their sex. There you go, all day long, fretting your jesses like a hawk, taking naught in the way of pleasure, and believing that she you love does likewise. But, as I think, you are grossly mistaken. Assuming that she loves you, keeps true to you, and does as you do (though I can never believe that she is so silly as to remain with her hands at her waistband), what harm or reproach or slight do you do her if, being now here, you take your pleasure with some other woman? How shall this bring her

any hurt? Do here what you like, and as all of us do who, not to seem wall-eyed, lick both sides of the platter, taking what is good when we may, since things left are lost. This gentlewoman here loves you, and tells you so, therefore you ought to love and woo her in your turn. What the devil would you have more? Remember that Dame Fortune wears her hair in front; the back of her head is bald. If she should see that you neglect the chances that she offers you, and she be angered against you, you may say, as they said when Giovanni Galeazzo was encamped about the walls of Florence, and caused races for the mantle to be run on St. John's Day, viz., 'The game is up, unless death be our help.'* Therefore, that you be not brought to a like pass, give yourself a good time while you may. Make up to this pretty gentlewoman; and when we are back again in Milan, you can amuse yourself with the other."

* Death, in fact, did come to the aid of the beleaguered Florentines, as their enemy, Gian Galeazzo, fell a victim to the plague on September 3, 1393. It is characteristic of the man that he should have taken the appearance in the heavens of a comet as a presage of his death. "I thank God," he exclaimed, "that He has suffered the signal for my recall to appear in the sky, so that all men may see it."

With these and a thousand similar arguments I sought to persuade him, but all my words fell upon deaf ears. He was firmly resolved not to break faith with his lady, and he begged me to say no more to him about this matter. When she got Cornelio's answer, the fair Mantuan was greatly mortified and confounded. However, making a virtue of necessity, she grew calm, and the ardour of her love changed to an intimate sisterly friendship. Even to this day she loves Cornelio as a brother. The first time she spoke to him after getting her answer she highly praised his loyal resolve, and even now, whenever love is the subject under discussion, she always declares Cornelio to be the truest and the most faithful of all lovers.

Laying aside, then, all other loves, Cornelio thought of no one save of his dear lady in Milan, his only consolation being to get letters now and again from her, or to write to her in reply. This seemed to cool the heat of his passion, a faint help, a slight comfort, perhaps, yet one which in a measure served to while away his time of exile.

One day a letter was delivered to him from

his lady-love which gave him much matter for thought, and he felt at a loss how to act. Camilla's husband, as it happened, was obliged to leave Milan for an estate of his in the country, where he would have to remain for some time. Knowing this, she wrote to Cornelio, as usual, an affectionate letter, in which, among other things, were these words :—

"See, now, my dear lord, if you and I have not fortune adverse to our wishes, and if we have not good reason to bewail our bad luck, for my husband is about to leave Milan for one of our places in the country, and will be absent for some days. Were you but here while he is away, we might easily be together; but I see no chance of this, and am infinitely grieved that we cannot meet." A thousand other loving messages followed, of the sort that damsels who love ardently are wont to write.

The letter greatly perplexed Cornelio, and at length he went to see his friend Delio, whom he loved as himself, and who when in Milan had known all about this love-matter, as indeed about all Cornelio's other affairs. Putting the paper into Delio's hand he said, "Read." Hardly

had Delio read the letter than he seemed to guess what Cornelio thought of doing, and said, "My friend, you want to go to Milan and get your head cut off, an absolutely unreasonable proceeding. I can easily see that this woman wants to cause your death, and make that death an ignominious one to boot, for you know what a grudge the French have against you."

"You are always harping on such horrors," replied Cornelio; "do but listen to me a little, for I should like us calmly to consider this question of my going, and judge which course to take that shall prove the lesser ill. You know how much I love that woman, and what sufferings I have borne in paying court to her, and in doing her loyal service. Yet, in spite of all my efforts to be alone with her, we have never yet had an opportunity for this. Now that her husband is not there, I could easily manage to meet her, and get that which I have so long desired; and, if this came to pass, I should prize the boon far more than aught else which fortune might bring me. What say you, now?"

"My dear Cornelio," replied his friend, "you would have us talk over the matter calmly, dis-

passionately; but I see no way of doing this, for you yourself are so passionately bent upon this woman, and have become so blind as not to see the death that stares you in the face. Therefore you must be ruled by one whose eyes are open. You know that I love you, for you have ofttimes put that love to the test, therefore take heed to what I say; drive these silly fancies out of your head, for all this that you think is mere vague imagination. I advise you as I would have you advise me were I in a like case, viz., on no account go to Milan. Do you forget that you have been proclaimed a rebel, and that all your goods are confiscated? You would hardly be gone from here than they would know of it in Milan. Just now, in Carnival-time, this place is full of masks, and there are many who spy out all that you say and do. Moreover, you have already been warned from Milan that you can do nothing that they do not know there. If, which God forbid! you go thither, and by mischance fall into the hands of the French, not all the gold in the world will save your head. Would you, just for a brief and fleeting pleasure, lose your life? Then, again, how can you be certain of getting there in safety?

You would have to pass through Cremona and Soncino, or else by way of Pizzighitone and Lodi. In all these places you are better known than the wayside nettle. Yet, assuming that you travel by disused roads to avoid being seen, what assurance have you, on reaching Milan, that you will obtain of her that which you so hotly desire?

"I believe that, knowing that you could not, and indeed dared not, go to Milan, she wrote thus to show you that she ever bears you in her thoughts and loves you most dearly; for, had she believed that you could with safety come, she would have written differently. Now, supposing that when you arrive she is perfectly ready to do your pleasure, ought you not to reflect what sort of house hers is, and that, though her husband be absent, his household servants are all at home? Don't you know what a grim old body is her female companion, who never leaves her side for an instant, and perhaps even sleeps with her when the husband is away? For just one hour of bitter-sweet toying, would you endanger your life? And if mischance should overtake you in this attempt, what would be said of you, then? Though young, you are deemed wise, with prudence and

wit riper than your years might warrant; do not, then, shake the general belief in your discretion. If for the service and benefit of your lord you must needs go to Milan, and if evil betided you, at the least you would win general compassion even from your foes, being praised as the loyal, faithful servant of your master. But, for such a thing as this, besides the hurt, you would only get perpetual reproach and ignominy. My brother, do you keep this life of yours which you value so lightly; keep it for a better use, for a more honourable enterprise than this."

This advice served to cool Cornelio's ardour not a little, albeit it was much against his will. Being at a loss what to answer, he remarked that night was the mother of thoughts, and that he would reflect further upon the matter before he saw Delio again. So saying, he took his leave. When night came, and he found himself alone, as sleep he could not, he gave rein to his thoughts, turning over all in his mind, and remembering the argument he had had with Delio. There being no one at hand to contradict him, appetite overcame him; and he determined, though death should be his portion, to go to Milan.

He rose with the dawn and went to see Delio, who was still abed, saying to him, "Delio mine, I have determined, no matter what befall me, to start on such and such a day at nightfall, and go straight away to Cremona, and wait there until the city-gate is opened, when I shall visit the house of our friend Messer Girolamo, and stay with him all day. Late in the evening I must push on to Lodi at Zurlesco, where I shall be privily lodged at Signor Oistarino's. Here also I mean to remain a whole day until evening, when I shall journey on to Milan, arriving there in the third hour of the night. As you know, the Porta Ticinese is open at all hours to any one who can pay the porter a few pence; and, on entering the city, I shall go straight to Messer Ambrogio's."

When Delio knew of his friend's intention, he used all possible efforts to turn him from his purpose. But though he said all that he knew and all that he could, Cornelio was resolutely determined to go at all cost, adding as a final reason, "I would fain try my fortune, and, if the thing succeeds, as I desire and hope it may, what more fortunate and happy lover than I? And if it should happen

otherwise, this solace at least I shall have, that she whom I love will plainly perceive that my devotion to her was true, and not feigned."

When Delio saw that Cornelio was determined to run such a risk, and that no remedy might avail to hinder him, he said that, as Cornelio was bent upon going, he had better leave his own servants behind in Mantua, and take with him others of trustworthy character, who were not known in Milan. He accordingly engaged three servants, and got everything in readiness. On the evening appointed he stealthily quitted Mantua, and, taking the route he had already planned, he reached Milan in the third hour of the night, and went straight to the house of Messer Ambrogio, his very faithful friend. He bade one of his serving-men knock at the door and tell Messer Ambrogio to come down at once, as there was a gentleman who wished to speak with him. Then Cornelio whistled in such a way that Ambrogio knew it was he; so, coming down, he unbarred the door and said, "Who's there?" Without answering, Cornelio made a certain sign, when Messer Ambrogio, doubly assured of the truth, caused the torches to be taken inside which he had had brought out with him to light the threshold,

and then joyfully welcomed his friend. He took him into a chamber on the ground floor, letting nobody know who the new-comer was, except one trusted servant. It was in the month of February, and for many days there had been no rain nor snow to spoil the roads, so that they were very dusty; however, Cornelio had had an easy ride of it.

When morning came Cornelio sent for a tailor, who used to carry letters to him from Camilla. The man was overjoyed at seeing him, and they talked together for a good while. Cornelio then gave the tailor a letter, which he was to take to his lady. When aware of her lover's arrival in Milan, she felt at once glad and sorrowful—glad in the hope of seeing her Cornelio, who loved her and her alone, she was very certain, since he had exposed himself to such peril for her sake; and sorrowful, because in a day or so her husband would return. You must know that in the letter she wrote to Cornelio she mistook the day of her husband's going, so that Cornelio delayed his departure from Mantua overlong. Camilla sent back a billet by the tailor, to tell Cornelio that she would expect to meet him that very day at such and such an hour at the gateway of her palace. He was to come masked, and make

a certain sign. At the time fixed, Cornelio (wearing a mask) donned one of those long coloured dresses then in fashion with Milanese gentlemen, put plumes in his cap, and, mounting a beautiful little jennet, rode off alone to Camilla's house. There she stood in the doorway, talking to some gentlemen, looking lovelier and more graceful than ever. Cornelio halted, and bowing to the lady gave the sign, but did not utter a word. Seeing a mask stop silently near them, and thinking it might be some one who wished to speak to Camilla unobserved, the gentlemen discreetly set spurs to their mules and rode off, leaving Cornelio (though they did not recognise him) a fair field. When they had gone he reverently saluted the lady, who, amid countless blushes, was for a long while unable to say a word. Half beside himself for joy, Cornelio could hardly realise his position as he gazed upon the supreme beauty of his lady-love. At length, breaking this delicious silence, they found voice, and spoke much of their great love, fortune favouring them in this talk; for though many masks and cavaliers passed along the street, no one, noticing the lady in close converse with a mask, accosted them, so that they talked on, unhindered, until the brown dusk fell.

The lady chid her lover not a little for having exposed himself to so perilous a risk, blaming him moreover for not coming in time, as she hourly expected her husband. So Cornelio produced her own letter, and, reading it, showed her that she had mistaken the date of her husband's departure by a week, which error much confused her. Nevertheless she agreed to see Cornelio that night at the fourth hour, when her serving-maid, being in the secret, should at a given signal let him into the house. If, however, that evening the husband should have come back, on giving the signal Cornelio would hear the waiting-woman say at one of the windows of the great hall, "I am sure that I left the comb here, but now I cannot find it."

Upon getting this promise, Cornelio in great glee returned to the inn, where he partook of a light meal; and when the Broletto clock struck four he put on a coat of mail, with gauntlets and sleeves to match, and, taking a sword, set out for his lady's house. While waiting there for the door to be opened he heard, close by, a great buffeting of armed men, and the noise of many blows. Then one, running past, called out, "Alack! I am dead!" and fell down in front of Camilla's

door, just as the maid opened it for Cornelio to enter. The night was very dark, so that, without a light, nothing whatever could be seen; but the noise of this scuffle had brought some of the neighbours to their windows with lights, and one of them, living opposite, spied Cornelio going into the lady's house, sword in hand. Though he heard somebody fall close at his feet, Cornelio took no heed, not even thinking about this, for his whole mind was set on something else. The maid took him into a room between the postern and the main entrance, where he was to wait till Camilla came. She, hearing that her lover was downstairs, feigned sudden indisposition, and told all her servants to go to bed. Hereupon the men-servants all went out of the house to sleep, as it was Carnival-time, and their master was away, leaving only the old cellarer and two pages, lads of about fourteen years, at home. The women of the house went to their beds; and, when she knew that they were all sleeping, Camilla crept downstairs with the maid, as quietly as she could, to fetch Cornelio up to her chamber.

While all this was going on, the watch happened to pass along the street. The head of the police

at that time was a certain Monsignor Sandio, a very tall, big man, such as one seldom sees, who as his lieutenant had one Mombojero.

Having heard of the fray (which was now over), and finding a groom in the service of Signor Galeazzo Sanseverino (Master of the Horse to his most Christian Majesty the King) half dead, and his body still warm, the captain of the watch called up the neighbours, and sought to know from them how the fight began. But these could tell nothing, save that they had heard a great outcry and clash of arms. Then one of them suddenly said that he had seen a tall fellow, sword in hand, go into Madonna Camilla's house, at whose threshold the dead groom lay. So the officer went thither, and, knocking loudly, called out in French, "What ho, there! Let me in!" At this the lovers were greatly terrified, as they believed that some spy had found out that Cornelio was there. Camilla had only just joined her gallant in the room below, and was about to give him an affectionate embrace, he doing likewise, when, lo and behold! the watch knocked at the door.

Startled by the noise, Cornelio, quick as thought, clapped two stools one upon another, and, helped

by Camilla and her maid, climbed up into the chimney, where, planting his feet firmly on the two great hooks from which pots hang, he kept in an upright position, having his sword in his hand. Then, taking away the stools, and closing the room, Camilla said, "Who is there? Who knocks?" The keys were fetched, and when the cellarer and other women-folk, roused by the noise, came up, they opened the door, and Camilla in her boldest voice cried, "What do you want at this hour?" The captain, who had heard that the palace belonged to a person of quality, answered, "Pardon us, madam, if we disturb you at this hour, for we do it unwillingly. I was told that he who killed the groom, who lies outside your door, entered in here; and, if this be so, I have come with the watch to arrest him." Camilla, who had feared it was her lover they wanted, was half-reassured at hearing this; and she replied, "Sir, I have had my door locked ever since nightfall, as my husband is away from home, so I know that nobody has entered the house, as I have kept the keys. But, in order to satisfy you, all the rooms shall be opened, so you may search."

So they first of all entered the room where poor Cornelio was hiding in the chimney, who through the hole at the top watched the stars and shivered.

Searching here, there, and everywhere, under the bolsters and under the bed, one of the sergeants, to show what special zeal was his, struck the rope holding up the canopy over the bed with his halberd, so that the whole thing came tumbling down. Cornelio kept perfectly quiet, repeating to himself the monkeys' paternosters.* Leaving this room the fellows searched in every hole and corner of the house; and when they could only find the two pages and the cellar-man, they went down into the basement. Thinking the assassin might be hidden inside the casks, they were desirous to taste the flavour of most of the wines. As often happens on such occasions, some of the neighbours came in to see what was going on; among these was the fellow who had told the captain of the watch that he saw the murderer enter the house. Not finding the culprit, the captain decided to take his accuser before the court, believing that he knew more about the matter.

* Which means that his teeth chattered with cold and fright.

Hardly had the officer and his men got half-way down the street than Camilla's husband came up. Finding the door open, and the neighbours with his wife making a great fluster and buzzing, he was greatly astonished. When Camilla saw him she felt more dead than alive, and cried out, "Alas! my lord, just look here at what these sergeants of the watch have been doing to this room and to the whole house!" Taking him by the hand, she led him into the chamber where Cornelio was; and in order to let the latter know that her husband had come back, she called out loudly, "Look, husband dear; look how the rogues have turned everything upside down!" Then she told him why the watch had come; but her husband, being very tired, felt more inclined for rest than anything else, so he said, "Wife, let us go to bed now, and we will see to these matters in the morning."

Apprised by his voice of the husband's return, Cornelio for very fright was like to have swooned. Then the neighbours were sent away, the door locked, and the horses taken off to the stables hard by. The husband went up to his room, where he had a fire lighted, and got the servants

to undress him preparatory to going to bed, while two of his men lay down in the room where Cornelio was hiding up the chimney, in sore discomfort, and knowing not what to do. Some of the other serving-men had put their arquebuses and partisans here before going to sleep in their usual quarters. Leaving her husband abed, Camilla came down again with her maid to discover if there were any way of setting Cornelio free. When she saw the two servants in bed there, she said, "You ought not to have put yourself here, as everything is in such a mess." Then the major-domo came in and said, "Let them shift, lady, just for to-night as best they may, and in the morning all shall be put straight. Do you go up to bed, for by now it must be midnight."

Camilla saw that she could give her lover no sort of help, so she said, "I also came down to see that no fire was lighted here, as the chimney top is cracked, and might easily set the house on fire." With this she went upstairs, still thinking of poor Cornelio. Finding her husband nearly asleep, she lay down beside him, and said, "You have come home rather late, my lord, for this

cold weather." "Yes," he answered, "I left Novara this morning, expecting to get here by nightfall, but our kinsfolk, the Cribelli, kept me such a time at Buffaloro that I changed my mind, and decided to have supper and sleep at our place on the Navilio. I got there late, and the steward had prepared an excellent supper for us, but asked me to excuse the bad sleeping accommodation, as the beds, which in war-time had been fetched away to Milan, had not yet come back, though I thought they had. So I determined to come on here as soon as we had supped; and, as the roads were good, and the way safe, we did this."

Cornelio, who had heard all that went on, was now in a greater fright than ever, fearing that, overcome by sleep, he might fall down and be killed by the servants. On the other hand, the icy blasts which blew down the chimney seemed to pierce his very bones. He more than once thought of letting himself drop as gently as possible when those in the room were fast asleep, and so escape; but he was unfamiliar with the house, and knew neither how to get out nor where to hide. Then, again, his feet hurt him greatly, as the hooks

were round, and to stand on them for long was most uncomfortable; indeed, he could hardly keep himself in that position at all. Nevertheless, hoping to get away when morning came, he buoyed himself up with this faint hope, thinking of his lady's beauty, and saying to himself now and again, "The great discomfort that I now endure is not half as great as that which I ought to suffer for the enjoyment of such beauty and charm as belong to my lady. How should she know that I loved her wholly and solely, if for her sake I did not endure far greater perils and far sharper pains?" So, with thoughts such as these, and helped by ardent love, he set himself courageously to bear all.

In the meanwhile, as we have seen, the captain of the watch took the accuser to the court and brought him before Mombojero, who, after questioning him, threatened him with all kinds of tortures if he did not tell the truth about the groom's murder. But the poor wretch could only repeat what at first he had said; and Mombojero thereupon ordered the watch to go back to the house, and search it thoroughly from top to bottom. So the captain returned thither with his men, and

knocked so loud that all in the house heard him. The cellarer got up first, and, fetching the keys, went to open the door, while his master dressed himself. On entering, the officer went straight to the room where Cornelio was, who had heard all, and thought the sergeants were come on some other pretext to arrest him. Seeing the two lackeys asleep, and finding halberds and firearms in the room, the captain in a trice had both fellows bound. The steward had only just got out of prison, where he had been kept a long while for wounding a workman. When the man asked what all this might mean, the officer, recognising him, replied, "Marry, but you shall soon know, and pay both for this and the other affair as well." Then, just as the sergeants were going upstairs, down came the secretary, whom they promptly arrested. In great surprise at hearing this, the master of the house, half dressed, meets the captain on the stairs, who calls out, "Monsignor, you are a prisoner of the most Christian king!" To say this and to seize him was the work of an instant. They also clapped hands on three or four others, making the very deuce of a rumpus, so that it was as if the Day of Judgment had come. Cornelio, hearing all

their din, said to himself, "God help us! what devilry are they up to now?"

The master of the house tried to make excuses for his servants and himself, saying that he had only returned from the country a little before midnight with his men. But it was in vain to protest, as the watch without further ado marched the whole nine of them off to the court-house, where they were put in the prisons.

At this fresh trouble Camilla wept bitterly. But as she knew that her husband and his folk were innocent of the murder in question, she thanked God for what had happened, as it gave her a chance to set her faithful lover free. So, after locking the door, and sending her women and the others back to their beds, she went with her maid into the room where poor Cornelio, like the Jews, awaited the coming of the Messiah. Approaching the chimney she dried her tears, and laughingly called up to Cornelio, "Sweetheart, how are you? What are you doing? You may safely come down now, for God, to prevent a greater scandal, has suffered my lord husband with most of his serving-men to be carried off to the court-house." Then the maid placed the stools as before, and she and her

mistress held them fast for Cornelio to step on. He soon came deftly down, and was gleefully welcomed by Camilla, who took him upstairs to her chamber, where a good fire was lighted. After washing his hands and face, which were all besmirched with soot, Cornelio soon shook off the chill that the chimney had given him, and laughed many a time with her at all these misadventures which had befallen him.

Early next morning Camilla had her lover taken to a little room, where everything he needed was fitly supplied to him by the maid; and here, when it was convenient, the lady visited him. Then, having summoned her relatives, she took steps for the release of her husband, informing them exactly how the whole thing had occurred. However, the matter went further than ever they thought, as it became necessary to send a notary to Novara to examine witnesses, and also make inquiries at the village where the hapless gentleman and his crew had supped, to prove the truth of their assertions. In this way six days elapsed before they could get out of prison, and all the while Cornelio passed every night in his lady's company, for fear that, sleeping alone, she might

see some disagreeable ghost. Then, knowing the day of her husband's home-coming, she sent Cornelio away betimes, after countless kisses and endearments, when he straightway returned to the inn. Having dined, he went, masked, to pay his respects to Signor Alessandro Bentivoglio and his lady, Signora Ippolita Sforza. While conversing with them certain gentlemen came in, one of whom told how Mombojero had just been with the police officers to Cornelio's house, having got wind of his departure from Mantua, and of his arrival in Milan. At this news Cornelio soon bade his friends farewell, and, going back to his lodging, determined to remain no longer in such peril. So, that very night, he took horse and rode back to Mantua, by way of Bergamo and Brescia, not caring to travel by the road that he had first taken, lest haply he might meet some ill-favoured folk by the way.

OF the sad end of two hapless lovers, one dying of poison, and the other of grief; together with sundry events.

IF the affection which deservedly I cherish for my own native country do not deceive me, few cities, I take it, in this fair Italy of ours can excel Verona in beauty of position, placed as it is on so noble a river as the Adige, whose limpid waters divide the city, and cause it to abound in such merchandise as Germany sends thither. Fair fruitful hills and pleasant valleys environ it, while its beauty is enhanced by many fountains of pure sparkling water, as also by four stately bridges across the river, and by a thousand other notable objects of antiquity which may there be seen. But if I speak now, it is not because I am moved to praise my native nest, which of itself proclaims its own merit and distinction, for I would tell you of the lamentable misfortunes that befell two noble lovers in this city.

At the time of the Signori della Scala there were two families in Verona renowned for their high birth and great wealth. These were the Montecchi and the Capelletti, between whom, for some reason or other, there existed a fierce and bloody feud, and, there being strength on either side, in various frays many were killed, not only of the Montecchi and the Capelletti, but also of their followers and partisans. This served ever to augment their mutual hate.

Bartolomeo Scala, being at that time lord of Verona, was at great pains to pacify both parties; but so deeply rooted was their hatred, that he could never bring them to order. Nevertheless, if he might not establish peace, he at any rate put a stop to the perpetual frays which too often resulted in loss of life; and if they chanced to meet, the younger men always gave way to the elder of their adversaries.

It happened that one winter, soon after Christmas, festivals were held, which maskers attended in large numbers. Antonio Capelletto, the head of his house, gave a very splendid entertainment, to which he invited many noblemen and gentlefolk. Most of the young bloods of the city were there,

among them being Romeo Montecchio, a youth of twenty or thereabouts, and the handsomest and most courteous in all Verona. Wearing a mask, he went with several of his companions to Capelletto's house at nightfall. Just then Romeo was deeply enamoured of a gentlewoman, whose slave he had been for nearly two years, and, though he constantly followed her to churches and other places, she had never yet vouchsafed him so much as a single glance. Often had he written letters to her and sent messages; but so hard of heart was she that she would not smile graciously upon the love-sick youth, and this grieved him so much that he resolved to leave Verona, and stay away for one or two years, so that by travelling here and there in Italy he might abate the vehemence of his passion. Then again, overcome by his fervent love, he blamed himself for harbouring so foolish a thought, and it appeared utterly impossible to quit Verona. At times he would say to himself: "It can no longer be true that I love her, for in a thousand ways I have had clear proofs that she does not value my devotion. Why should I persist in following her everywhere, since courting her is

useless? It behoves me never to go to a church nor any other place that she frequents, so that, not seeing her, this fire within me that is fomented by her beautiful eyes may gradually die out."

Alas! all such thoughts proved vain, for it seemed that the more coy she showed herself, giving him less reason to hope, the more his love for her increased, and on no day that he did not see her could he be happy or at ease. As his devotion became ever deeper and more constant, some of his friends feared that he would waste away, and they often admonished him and besought him to relinquish such an enterprise. But for their warnings and healthful counsel he cared as little as did the lady for his love.

Romeo had a comrade who was deeply concerned about his hopeless love, and greatly regretted that in pursuit of a woman he should lose golden youth and the very flower of his years. He would often expostulate with Romeo upon the subject; and one day he said: "Loving you, Romeo, as I do like a brother, it sorely vexes me to see you wasting thus like snow before the sun. As all that you do and all that you spend brings you neither honour nor profit,

for you cannot induce her to love you, and all your efforts only make her more froward, why should you longer strive in vain? It is quite clear to you that for you and for your service she cares not a jot. It may be that she has some lover who is so dear and pleasant to her that she would not leave him for an emperor. You are young—perhaps the comeliest youth in all Verona; moreover, you are courteous, amiable, brave, and well versed in letters—to youth, a rare adornment. You are your father's only son, whose great riches are well known to all. Has he ever shown himself close-fisted towards you, or scolded you for spending and giving just as you liked? He is your man of business, toiling to amass wealth for you, and letting you do just what pleases you. Rouse yourself, then, and see the error of your ways. Strip off the veil that blinds your eyes and will not let you see the road in which you should walk. Resolve to turn your thoughts elsewhere, and to make some woman your mistress who shall be worthy of you. Entertainments and masked balls are about to be given in the city; to all of these you must go. If by chance you should meet her whom

you have so long courted in vain, give her not a glance, but look in the mirror of that love which you bore for her, and doubtless you will find recompense for all the ills that you have suffered. Disdain most just and reasonable will then be aroused within you, which shall presently daunt your ill-regulated passion, and shall set you free."

With many similar arguments Romeo's trusty comrade sought to turn him from so hapless an enterprise. Romeo listened patiently, and determined to profit by such wise counsel. He went to all the festivals, and whenever he met the froward damsel he never gave her a look, but turned all his attention to others, examining them critically with a view to choosing the one he liked best, just as if he had come to market to buy a doublet or a horse.

Thus, as we have said, Romeo went to the festival given by the Capelletti, and after wearing his mask for a while he took it off, and sat down in a corner whence he could leisurely survey all who were in the hall, where numerous torches made the light as bright as that of day. Every one looked at Romeo, especially the ladies,

and all wondered that he should show himself thus freely in the house. But, as in addition to great good looks he had most charming manners, everybody took a liking to him, and his enemies gave no heed to him, as they might have done had he been older. Thus Romeo figured there as a judge of the beauty of all those ladies who came to the ball, praising this or that one as the fancy took him, preferring to criticise rather than to dance.

Suddenly he noticed a maiden of extraordinary beauty, whom he did not know. She pleased him infinitely, and he deemed her the loveliest and most graceful damsel that he had ever seen. The more he gazed at her, the more beautiful and charming did she seem to become, so he began to throw her amorous glances; in fact, he could not take his eyes off her. A strange joy filled him as he looked, and he inwardly resolved to use every endeavour to win her favour and her love. Thus supplanted by this new affection, his love for the other lady waned, and its fires were extinguished. Having set foot in love's delicious maze, Romeo, while not daring to inquire who the damsel might be, was content to feast

his eyes upon her beauty, and as thus captivated by her charm he waxed eloquent in praise of her every gesture, insensibly he drank in draughts of the luscious poison of love. As I have said, he sat in a corner of the ball-room, and watched all the dancers as they passed. The name of the maiden whose beauty thus charmed him was Giulietta, and she was the daughter of the host. To her Romeo was unknown, but he seemed to her the handsomest youth she had ever met, and she took a strange pleasure in looking at him, though she did this in shy, furtive fashion, while in her heart she felt a rapture indefinably delicious and immeasurably sweet. She was most anxious that Romeo should dance with her, so that she might the better see him and hear him speak, believing that in his voice there would be as great a charm as in his eyes. But Romeo showed no desire to dance, and sat there in his corner alone, intently gazing at the lovely damsel, while looking at no one else, and by this interchange of glances and gentle sighs they sought to acquaint each other with their mutual love.

The ball was now about to end with a torch-dance, or, as some style it, a cap-dance. Romeo

was invited to join in this by a lady, and after dancing with her he bowed, and, giving the torch to another lady, went close to Giulietta and took her by the hand, an act that gave to each inestimable pleasure. Giulietta thus stood between Romeo and another gentleman named Marcuccio, a man of the court, and most agreeable, whose witty, pleasant ways made him a general favourite. He had always got some good story to set the company laughing, while his merriment brought with it harm to none. At all times, in winter or in summer, he had hands as cold and icy as an Alpine glacier, and, though he might warm these for a good while at the fire, they always remained stone cold. With Romeo on her left, Giulietta had Marcuccio on her right, and when she felt the lover take her hand, being possibly desirous to hear him speak, she turned gaily to him and said with trembling voice, "Blessings attend your coming to my side!" So saying, she pressed his hand lovingly. Romeo, being quick of wit, gently returned the pressure, as he answered, "Lady mine, what blessing is this that you bestow upon me?" Then, with a sweet smile, she said, "Do not marvel, Oh, gentle youth, that I bless your coming here, as Messer

Marcuccio has been freezing me for a good while past with his ice-cold hand; but now, all thanks to you, your delicate hand has warmed me." To this Romeo instantly answered, "Lady, whatever service I can do for you will be to me supremely dear, as to serve you is all that I desire in this world; and I shall count myself happy if you will but deign to command me as you would command the least of your servants. Let me tell you, moreover, that if my hand warms you, the fire of your fair eyes burns all my being, and if you give me no help to endure such heat, it will not be long before you see me entirely consumed and changed to ashes." He had hardly said these words when the torch-dance came to an end, and Giulietta, full of passion, pressed his hand, as with a sigh she said falteringly, "Alas! what can I say but that I am much more yours than mine!"

As all the guests were now departing, Romeo waited to see which way the damsel went; but he soon discovered that she was a daughter of the house, and of this one of his friends assured him who had made inquiry of many of the ladies. The news disconcerted him not a little, as he held it to be a most perilous and difficult matter to attain the

end of his amorous desire. But the wound was already open, and had become deeply impregnated with love's subtle poison.

Giulietta, on the other hand, desired to know who the youth was to whose comeliness she had fallen a victim; so she called her nurse aside into a chamber, and stood at a window overlooking the street, which was clearly lighted up by all the torches. Then she began to ask the nurse who this one was, wearing such and such a doublet, or that one with a sword, or the other; and she also asked who the handsome youth might be who carried a mask in his hand. The good old woman, who recognised nearly all of them, told Giulietta the names of each; and she also pointed out Romeo, for him she knew well. At the name Montecchio the damsel was as one stunned, and she despaired of ever getting Romeo for her husband, because of the deadly feud between the two families; nevertheless, outwardly she showed nothing of her discontent. That night she slept little, being full of many thoughts; yet refrain from loving Romeo she could not and would not, so passionately was she enamoured. His exceeding beauty encouraged her; and then

again the difficulty and peril of the thing caused her to despair, so that she became a prey to conflicting thoughts, as she said to herself: "Whither shall I let these ungovernable desires of mine transport me? How can I tell, fool that I am, if Romeo loves me? Perhaps the roguish lad only said such words to deceive me, and, having obtained a shameful advantage, would laugh to see me turned into his trull, taking thus his revenge for the feud that grows ever fiercer between his kinsfolk and my own! Yet he is more generous of soul than to betray her who loves, ay, who adores him! If the countenance be the manifest index of the mind, in a form so fair no ruthless heart of iron could dwell; nay, I am prone to think that from a youth so handsome and gentle one could only expect love, courtesy, and kindness. Let us then suppose that, as I would fain believe, he loves me, and would have me for his lawful wife; may I not reasonably think that to this my father will never consent? Yet who knows that such a match might not engender between the two families perpetual concord and a lasting peace? I have often heard that marriages have made peace not only between private citizens and

gentlemen, but frequently between the greatest of princes and kings, cruel wars being followed by true peace and friendship, to the great contentment of all. Perhaps in this way I may bring about a tranquil peace between the two houses."

Being therefore possessed of this thought, whenever she saw Romeo pass along the street she always smiled gaily at him, and this greatly rejoiced his heart. No less than hers, his thoughts were at continual strife, now hopeful of mood, and anon despairing. Nevertheless he continued to pass in front of the maiden's house, by day as by night, though it was at his great peril, and Giulietta's kind glances only increased his ardour, and drew him to that particular part of the city. The windows of Giulietta's chamber overlooked a narrow passage, a farm-shed being opposite; and when Romeo passed along the main road, on reaching the top of the passage he often saw the girl at her window, who always smiled and seemed delighted to see him. He often went there at night and stopped in this passage, as it was unfrequented, and also because, if he stood opposite Giulietta's window, he could sometimes hear her speak. He being there one night,

Giulietta, either because she heard him or for some other reason, opened her casement, when he withdrew to the shed, but not before she recognised him, for with her splendour the moon had made all the roadway bright. Being alone in her chamber, she softly called to him and said: "What are you doing here at this hour alone? If they should catch you here, alas, what would become of you! Do you not know how cruel is the enmity that exists between your house and ours, and how many thereby have met their death? Of a truth you will be ruthlessly slain, and thus to you mortal hurt, and to me dishonour, will ensue."

"Lady mine," replied Romeo, "it is the love that I cherish for you which brings me here at this hour, nor do I doubt that if your folk found me they would try to kill me, albeit, so far as my feeble powers would let me, I should endeavour to do my duty; and though overwhelmed by numbers, I would make every effort not to die alone. Indeed, if in this amorous enterprise I needs must perish, what death more fortunate could befall me than to die near you? Never, methinks, may it happen that I shall be the cause

of putting the least stain upon your honour, for with my own blood I shall ever strive to keep it, as now it is, bright and fair. But if you held my life as dear as I hold yours, you would remove all these barriers and make me the happiest man alive." "Then what would you have me do?" said Giulietta. And Romeo answered, "I would have you love me as I love you, and let me come into your chamber, so that with greater ease and less danger I may show you the magnitude of my love, and all the bitter pain that perpetually I suffer for your sake."

Vexed somewhat at hearing this, Giulietta in confusion answered: "Romeo, you know your love, and I know mine, and I know moreover that I love you as deeply as any one may love another—perhaps more than befits my honour. But let me say that if you are minded to enjoy me without the holy bond of matrimony you are very greatly mistaken, and we may nowise agree. Knowing, as I do, that if you visit this neighbourhood too often you may easily meet with certain evil folk, when I should never be happy again, I conclude that, if you would be mine, as I would be yours for ever, you must make me your lawful wife. If you wed

me I shall always be ready to come to whatever place you please. But if some other fancy fills your head, begone about your business and leave me in peace."

At these words, Romeo, who wished for nothing better, gaily replied that this was his one and only desire, and that whenever it pleased her he would espouse her in whatever way she should appoint. "This is well," added Giulietta, "but, that our marriage be celebrated in orderly fashion, I would have it solemnised in the presence of the reverend Friar Lorenzo da Reggio, my spiritual father." To this they agreed, and it was decided that on the following day Romeo should speak to the friar about the matter, as he was on intimate terms with him.

Friar Lorenzo belonged to the Minor Brotherhood, a master in theology, a great philosopher, and a skilled expert in many things, including chemistry and magic. As the worthy friar desired to keep up his good reputation with the people and also enjoy such pleasures as he was minded to take, he sought to do his business as cautiously as possible. To provide against every emergency, he always endeavoured to get the support of some nobleman of

high repute. Among other friends whose favour he enjoyed in Verona, he had Romeo's father, a gentleman of great credit whom every one highly esteemed. He firmly believed the friar to be a most holy man, and Romeo was also much attached to him, being beloved by Fra Lorenzo in return as a prudent and courageous youth. Not only with the Montecchi but also with the Capelletti he was on terms of close friendship, and he confessed most of the nobility of Verona, the men as well as the women.

Romeo, having decided to do this, took leave of Giulietta and returned home. When morning came, he went to the convent of San Francesco and told the friar of his fortunate love, and what he and Giulietta had determined to do. Hearing this, Fra Lorenzo promised to do all that he wished, as he could deny him nothing, and also because he felt sure that he could make peace between the Capelletti and the Montecchi and win greater favour with Signor Bartolomeo Scala, who was most desirous that the two houses should be reconciled, so that all strife in the city might cease. The two lovers therefore waited for an opportunity of confessing themselves in order to carry out their plan.

It was the time of Lent, and to make matters safer Giulietta resolved to confide in her old nurse, who slept with her in the same chamber. Profiting by an opportunity, she told the good woman the whole story of her love. However much the beldame chid her and bade her desist from such an enterprise, this had no effect, so that at length she acquiesced, and Giulietta prevailed upon her to carry a letter to Romeo. When the lover read what was written therein, he felt as if he were the happiest man in the world, for in the letter Giulietta asked him to come and speak with her at her chamber window at the fifth hour of the night, and bring a rope-ladder with him. Romeo had a trusty serving-man, whom he had often trusted with matters of importance, and had ever found him prompt and loyal. Telling him of his design, he charged him to procure the rope-ladder, and when everything was ready set out at the time fixed with Pietro, for so the servant was named. He found Giulietta waiting for him, who on recognising him let down the cord which she had prepared, and they drew up the ladder, which, with the nurse's help, she fixed firmly to the iron grating, and then waited for

her lover to come up. He boldly climbed up, while Pietro withdrew to the shed opposite. On getting up to the window, Romeo talked to Giulietta through the iron grating, the bars of which were so close together that a hand was hardly able to pass through them. After loving greetings, Giulietta said to him: "Signor mine, dearer to me than the light of my eyes, I sent for you to tell you that I have arranged with my mother to go to confession next Friday, in the sermon-hour. Inform Fra Lorenzo, so that he may have all things ready." Romeo replied that he had already told the friar, who was disposed to do all that they wished. When they had talked a while further of their loves, Romeo let himself down by the ladder and returned home with Pietro.

Giulietta became straightway very glad of heart, and every hour before she could wed her Romeo was to her as a thousand years. Romeo, for his part, felt just as gay and full of spirits, as he talked with his servant of it all. When Friday came, Madame Giovanna, Giulietta's mother, took her daughter and serving-women, and went to the San Francesco convent; and on entering the church she asked for Fra Lorenzo. The friar had

already taken Romeo into his cell where he heard confessions, and had locked him in. Then he went to Madame Giovanna, who said to him: "Father, I came to confess myself betimes, and I have also brought Giulietta with me, for I know that all the day you will be busy hearing the many confessions of your spiritual sons and daughters." Giving them his blessing, the friar passed into the convent and entered the confessional where Romeo was, while Giulietta followed as the first to present herself for confession.

When she had entered, and closed the door, she made a sign to the friar that she was within. He then raised the wicket, and after the usual greetings said: "My daughter, Romeo tells me that you have consented to take him as your husband, and that he is minded to make you his wife. Are you both still so disposed?" The lovers answered that this was all that they desired, whereupon the friar, after saying certain things in praise of holy matrimony, pronounced those words which the Church has ordained to be spoken at marriages, and Romeo then gave his dear Giulietta the ring, much to their mutual delight. They arranged to meet that night, and

after kissing each other through the opening of the wicket, Romeo cautiously quitted the cell and the convent, and gaily went about his business. The friar closed the grating so that it might seem as if nothing had been removed, and then heard the glad maiden's confession, as well as that of her mother and the serving-women.

When night had come, at the hour fixed, Romeo went with Pietro to a certain garden. Helped by the latter he climbed the wall, and let himself down into the garden, where he found his bride waiting for him with the nurse. On seeing Giulietta, he went to meet her with outstretched arms. Giulietta did the same, and, winding her arms about his neck, she remained for a while speechless—overcome, as it were, by such supreme delight, while her ardent lover was filled with a like rapture, and it seemed to him that never before had he tasted pleasure such as this. In mutual kisses then they took infinite, unspeakable delight, and, withdrawing to a corner of the garden where there was a bench, they then and there consummated the marriage.

After much delicious dalliance, Romeo and his lovely bride made arrangements for a future meet-

ing, resolving to discover what Messer Antonio would say with regard to the union and the making of peace. Then, after kissing his dear wife a thousand times, Romeo left the garden, saying joyfully to himself, "What man is there alive more happy than myself? Who is there that shall equal me in love? Or who ever possessed so fair and winsome a damsel as mine?" Nor did Giulietta deem herself less fortunate, since to her it seemed impossible that any youth could be found who in beauty, courtesy, and gracious bearing might equal her Romeo; and she anxiously waited until things might be so arranged that she could freely enjoy him without fear. Thus, on some days they met, while on others they forbore.

Meantime Fra Lorenzo tried all he could to effect a peace between the Montecchi and the Capelletti, and had brought matters to such a likely pass that he hoped to make the secret alliance a source of satisfaction to both parties. But at Easter-time it happened that several men of the Capelletti faction fell in with others of the Montecchi near the Borsari Gate facing Castel Vecchio, and, being armed, they fiercely attacked

them. Among the Capelletti was Tebaldo, Giulietta's first cousin, a stalwart youth who urged his comrades to give the Montecchi a sound thrashing and respect no one. The scuffle grew fiercer, when each side was reinforced with men and arms; so furious indeed became the fighters, that, recking nothing, they dealt each other grievous wounds.

Suddenly Romeo appeared upon the scene, who besides his henchmen had certain young fellows with him, who accompanied him in a jaunt about the city. Seeing his kinsmen fighting with the Capelletti he was greatly troubled, for he knew of the friar's scheme for peace, and felt doubly desirous that no dispute should arise. Therefore, to calm the disturbance, he called out to his comrades and servants, being heard by many others in the street: "Brothers, let us part these fellows, and see to it that, at all costs, the fray goes no further, but compel them to lay down their arms." Then he endeavoured to separate the combatants, while his friends did likewise, and tried their best by words and deeds to stop the fight. It was a vain attempt, however, the fury of either side having now reached such a pitch that blows fell thick and fast.

Two or three men had already fallen when Tebaldo, coming sideways at Romeo, dealt him a lusty stroke in the flank; but as he wore a corselet of mail, he was not wounded, as the blade could not pierce it. Then, turning towards Tebaldo, he said in friendly fashion: "Tebaldo, you are in great error if you think that I have come to pick a quarrel with you or with your people. I happened to be here by chance, and have tried to get my men away, being desirous that we should live like peaceful citizens. Therefore I beg you to do the same with your fellows, so that no further scandal ensue, for there has been bloodshed enough already."

Nearly all present heard these words spoken, but Tebaldo, either not understanding or not choosing to understand them, rushed wildly at Romeo to strike him on the head, crying out, "Traitor! you are a dead man!" Romeo wore gauntlets of mail, and, wrapping his cloak round his left arm, held this up to protect his head, and, turning the point of his sword towards his adversary, he ran him right through the throat, piercing it again and again, so that Tebaldo instantly fell, dead. Then there was a great outcry,

and as the officers of the court now came up the combatants escaped, some this way, and others that. Grieved beyond measure that he had killed Tebaldo, Romeo, with several of his folk, went to San Francesco, and hid himself in Fra Lorenzo's chamber. The good friar, at the news of young Tebaldo's death, was in despair, for he feared that now there would be no means of removing the hatred between the two families. The Capelletti in a body went to Signor Bartolomeo, the Governor, to lodge a complaint, while the Montecchi sought to defend Romeo, as there were many who could testify to his forbearance until Tebaldo attacked him. Thus either party argued hotly before Signor Bartolomeo. As it was proved that the Capelletti had been the assailants, while to Romeo's pacifying words several trustworthy citizens bore witness, the Governor made all of them lay down their arms, and banished Romeo from Verona.

In the house of the Capelletti there was great mourning for the death of their Tebaldo, while Giulietta's tears fell without ceasing, not for the loss of her cousin, but because all hope had vanished of the alliance, and she grieved greatly

and bemoaned her fate, as she could not conceive how the thing would end. Learning through Fra Lorenzo where Romeo was, she wrote him a most sorrowful letter and sent it to the friar by her old nurse. She knew that Romeo had been banished and that he must instantly quit Verona, so she affectionately besought him to let her go with him. Romeo wrote back cheering words and bade her be patient, as in time he would make everything right. He had not yet determined to what place he would go, but he would stay as near Verona as possible, and before leaving he would make every effort to meet her once more, and speak with her in whatever place was most convenient to herself.

As the least dangerous spot, she chose the garden in which she had passed her wedding-night; and accordingly at the time fixed Romeo, armed, came out of the convent, and, with his trusty servant Pietro, went to the garden, where Giulietta received him with floods of tears. For a while they were silent, unable to speak a word, drinking, as they kissed, each other's tears, and mourning bitterly for this sudden separation and all the adversities of fate. As the time for part-

ing drew near, Giulietta fervently besought her husband to take her with him, saying, "Dear my lord, I will cut off these locks of mine and don a page's dress, and wherever you please to go, there will I always come too, and lovingly do your behests. What more faithful servant could you have than I? Oh, my own dear husband, grant me this boon, and let your fortune be my fortune also, that what befalls you may befall me likewise!" With tender words Romeo sought to comfort her as best he might, assuring her that it was his firm belief that ere long his sentence of banishment would be revoked, as of this the Prince had already given his father some hope. Moreover, if he took her with him, it should not be in the garb of a page, but as his bride and his wife, whom he would see honourably attended as befitted her rank. His term of banishment, so he said, would not exceed a year, and if meanwhile no friendly truce were established between the factions, the Lord of Verona would see to it that at all hazards, and whether they wished it or not, they did become reconciled. Nay, if the matter were protracted overmuch, he would go over to the other side, since he could

not live long without his Giulietta. Then he told her to send him news of herself by letter, and said much else to comfort her, but Giulietta was inconsolable, and could only weep. Now, as the lights of dawn showed faint in the east, the sorrowing lovers kissed and embraced each other as before with many tears and sighs, then said farewell.

Romeo returned to the convent, while Giulietta went back to her chamber; and two or three days later, having laid his plans, he left Verona disguised as a merchant, having trusty companions about him, with whom he travelled in safety to Mantua. Here he took a house, for his father kept him supplied with money, and provided in every way for his honourable maintenance.

All day, and every day, Giulietta wept and sighed, scarcely eating or sleeping, her nights being as unrestful as her days. Noticing her daughter's grief, Giulietta's mother often questioned her as to its cause, telling her that it was time to cease such sorrowing, and that she had mourned overmuch for her cousin's death. Giulietta said that she did not know what ailed her, and whenever she could escape from the company she

gave vent to her grief with tears, so that she grew thin and sad, and all unlike the lovely Giulietta that once she was. Romeo kept her comforted by frequent letters, always giving her hope that soon they would be together again. He urgently besought her to be of good cheer and to let merriment dispel her melancholy, as all things were working together for good. Vain, however, was such counsel, as, without Romeo, she could get no cure for all her grief.

The mother thought that the girl's chagrin came from a desire to have a husband, as some of her companions had recently been married. Possessed by this idea, she told her lord of it, and said, "Husband, our daughter Giulietta leads a most miserable life, for she does nothing but weep and sigh, and, whenever she can, she shuns the society of every one. I have often asked her the reason of this sorrowing, and, indeed, have closely watched her on all sides to try and discover it, but I have never succeeded. She always has the same answer, to wit, that she does not know what ails her, while all the servants shrug their shoulders and say they cannot tell. Some grievous passion of a truth torments her, and it

is evident that she is wasting away as wax before the fire. Of the thousand reasons that I have imagined, one alone remains in my mind, and it is this—I greatly suspect that her grief comes from the fact that, last Carnival-time, some of her girl companions were married, while there is no talk of finding a husband for her. This next feast of Saint Euphemia she will be eighteen, so, husband mine, I thought I would say a word to you about it, as it seems to me that the time has come for you to find her a worthy and honourable husband, and not let her remain longer unwed, for she's hardly the sort of goods to keep by us at home."

Messer Antonio thought his wife's speech apt enough, and he replied: "Since you could make nothing, wife, of our daughter's melancholy, and as you think she ought to have a husband, I will do my best to get her one that shall in all respects be worthy of our house. Meanwhile, do you try and find out if she be in love, and let her say who the husband is that she prefers." Madame Giovanna declared that she would do all in her power, and make fresh inquiries of her daughter, and of others about the house. However, she could learn nothing.

Just at this time Messer Antonio's choice happened to fall upon the Count Paris di Lodrone, a very handsome and very rich young man, about twenty-four or twenty-five years of age. There seemed good hope of successfully arranging the match, and Messer Antonio told his wife of this. Thinking such an alliance most desirable, she in turn told Giulietta, who at the news became as one beside herself with grief. Perceiving this, Madame Giovanna was much annoyed, not knowing the cause of her daughter's discontent.

After much arguing, she said: "Well, daughter mine, as I take it, you wish for no husband;" to which Giulietta answered, "No, mother, I do not desire to wed; and, if you love me or care for me, never talk to me about a husband." "What do you want, then," rejoined her mother, "if you will not have a husband? Will you be a nun? Tell me frankly what you wish." Giulietta said that she did not want to be a nun; all that she desired was to die. At this answer the mother was filled with amazement and displeasure, and she knew neither what to say nor what to do. Those of the household were equally surprised, and could only affirm that ever since her cousin's

death Giulietta had been exceedingly sorrowful, weeping incessantly, and never showing herself at the windows. Having heard all from his wife, Messer Antonio sent for his daughter, and after some expostulation said: "My daughter, as you are now at a marriageable age, I have found a noble, rich, and handsome husband for you in the Count di Lodrone, therefore do as I bid you and get you ready to accept him, for it is seldom that matches as honourable as this are made." Hereupon, with more courage than befits a girl, Giulietta frankly answered that she did not wish to be married. The father was greatly incensed, and in his choler came near to striking her.

However, he only sharply scolded her with many harsh words, finally telling her that, whether she liked it or not, she must make up her mind in three or four days to go with her mother and other kinsfolk to Villafranca, where Count Paris and his companions intended to visit her. Moreover she must show no further opposition to this plan, if she did not wish him to break her head, and make of her the sorriest daughter that had ever been born. Giulietta's discomfiture may well be imagined; in sooth she was as if struck by

some fiery thunderbolt. Upon recovering herself, she let Romeo know everything, by means of Fra Lorenzo. Romeo wrote back bidding her be of good courage, as in a short while he would come and take her away with him to Mantua. So she was forced to go to Villafranca, where her father had a very beautiful estate. She went just as gaily as convicts go to crucifixion or the gallows. Count Paris, who was there, saw her in church at mass, and, albeit haggard, pale, and sad of mien, she pleased him; so he came to Verona, where the marriage was concluded with Messer Antonio. Giulietta also returned to Verona, when her father told her that the marriage-contract had been signed, and exhorted her to be cheerful. Struggling to show a brave front, she kept back the tears that rose in torrents to her eyes, as answer she made none. The wedding, so she learnt, was fixed for the middle of next September; so not knowing where to turn for help, she decided to go herself and see Fra Lorenzo, and take counsel with him as to how she might escape from these nuptials.

The festival of the glorious Assumption of the ever-blessed Virgin, Mother of our Redeemer, now

drew near, when Giulietta, profiting by the chance, went to her mother and said: "I neither know nor can I imagine the source of this deep melancholy that thus oppresses me, yet ever since Tebaldo's death I have never been happy, and it would seem that I am getting worse, since nothing serves to cheer me. Therefore, at this blessed Feast of the Assumption, I would fain attend confession, as perhaps in this way I shall gain some comfort in my tribulation. Sweet my mother, what say you? Do you think that I should do so? If there be some other road that in your opinion I ought to take, I pray you show it to me, since in my own mind nothing seems clear to me."

Madame Giovanna, being a good soul and very religious, was glad to hear of her daughter's intention, and highly commended her for it. Accordingly they went together to San Francesco, to see Fra Lorenzo. When he had entered the confessional, Giulietta, going in at the opposite side, presented herself before him and said: "Holy Father, no one better than you yourself knows what has transpired between my husband and myself, so there is no need for me to repeat it here. You will also remember to have read the letter that I forwarded

through you to Romeo, in which I told him that my father had made me the affianced bride of Count Paris di Lodrone. Romeo wrote back that he would come and save me, but God only knows when that will be. Now as matters stand, they have decided to have the wedding next September, and as the time draws near, I see no way to escape from this Lodrone, who should rather be called *ladrone* (thief) and assassin, since he would steal the property of another. Father, I have therefore come to you for counsel and help. These words that Romeo writes, 'I will come and set things right,' are not enough to get me out of the trap. I am Romeo's wife, with whom I have consummated marriage, and I can never be another's; nay, even if I could, I would not, for I mean to be his, and his eternally. Your help, then, and your counsel are what I need. Listen to what I thought of doing. I want you, father, to procure me a boy's dress with doublet and hose, so that, thus clad, I may leave Verona late one evening or early one morning. No one will recognise me, and I can go straight away to Mantua, to my Romeo's house."

When the friar heard this imprudent plan, he

was little pleased thereat, and said: "My daughter, this scheme of yours cannot be carried out, for you would run too great a risk. A damsel so tenderly nurtured as yourself could not bear the fatigue of such a journey, for you are not used to travel on foot, nor do you know the way, so that you would wander about hither and thither. As soon as your father discovered your absence from home, he would send spies to all the gates of the city and along all the main roads of the country round about; and without a doubt they would soon find you. When you had been brought home, your father would want to know the reason for your escaping thus in the dress of a man. How you would bear their threats and ill-usage I know not, and in your luckless endeavour to reach Romeo you would lose all hope of ever seeing him again."

At the friar's sagacious words, Giulietta grew calmer, and she replied: "Since my plan does not seem to you a good one, Father, and as I have full belief in you, pray give me your advice, and show me how to cut the hateful knot that binds me, so that possibly with less peril I may rejoin my Romeo, for I cannot live without him.

And if you can help me in no other way, prevent me at least from becoming another's, if Romeo's I may not be. He told me of your fame as a distiller of herbs and other things, and that you prepare a water which, without causing any pain, can kill a man in a couple of hours. Give me some of this; enough to free me from the hands of that *ladrone,* seeing that to restore me to Romeo is out of your power. Loving me as I know he loves me, he will be content that I should die rather than fall alive into the hands of others. Moreover you will save me and my house from grievous shame, and if there be no other way to rescue me from this tempestuous sea, on which I drift as some wrecked and rudderless bark, I swear it, that some night with a keen-edged dagger, in a frenzy, I will slit open the veins of my throat, being resolved to die rather than remain untrue to Romeo."

The friar was a great experimentalist, who in his day had travelled in various countries, delighting to gather new knowledge. He was specially well acquainted with the virtues residing in herbs and minerals, being one of the most famous distillers of the time. Among other

sleep-giving preparations, he made a paste, which afterwards he reduced to a very fine powder of truly marvellous efficacy. For, if dissolved in a little water, whoever drank it fell asleep in less than half an hour, and the draught had such a calming effect upon the vital forces that there was no physician, however famous or expert, who would not declare the drinker of it to be dead—a delicious death, lasting sometimes forty hours and sometimes more, according to the bodily temperament of those who took the draught. When the powder had done its work, the man or the woman awoke just as from some long, calm, restful sleep; and it caused them no harm whatever.

Now when the friar heard the disconsolate damsel's resolve, from sheer pity he was like to weep as he replied: "See now, my daughter, you must not talk of dying, for of a surety if once you die you will not return until the Judgment Day, when all the dead shall be raised together. I would have you think of living as long as it shall please God, for He gave you life and He preserves it, and, when it seems to Him good, He takes it back again. Thus put away from

you such melancholy thoughts. You are young, and must endeavour to live and enjoy your Romeo. We will find some remedy for it all, never fear. In this magnificent city, as you see, I am held by all in high repute, yet if folk should discover that I knew of your marriage, it would bring me infinite harm and shame. And if I gave you poison, what then? I have none, but if I had, I would not give you any, because it would be to sin grievously against God, and also because I should utterly lose my credit. Nevertheless, O my daughter, I will gladly do all I can for you, so that you may remain Romeo's bride, and not become the wife of this Lodrone. Nor shall you die; but it behoves us to act so that no one shall know of the matter. You, for your part, must be resolute and brave, and determine to do as I bid you, though this shall not cause you the least harm. Listen, then, to what I mean you to do."

Then the friar showed the damsel his sleeping-powder and explained to her its virtues, and that he had often tried it, but had never found it fail in its effect.

"My daughter," said he, "this powder is so

precious that it will give you a harmless sleep, and all the time you thus quietly rest, if Galen, Hippocrates, Messue, Avicenna, and all the most famous physicians past and present were to see you and feel your pulse, with one voice they would all declare you to be dead. And when the powder has done its work, you will awake as healthy and as fresh as when at morning you leave your couch. At the first signs of dawn you must drink the potion, when you will gradually fall asleep, and when the hour for rising comes your kinsfolk will endeavour to wake you, but in vain. Your pulse will have ceased to beat, and you will be as cold as ice. When summoned, doctors and relatives will one and all pronounce you dead, and at evening time you will be buried in the vault of the Capelletti. There, at your ease, you will rest for a night and a day, and the next night Romeo and I will come to take you hence (for meanwhile I shall inform him of our plan by special messenger), and he will secretly convey you to Mantua and keep you there in hiding, until this blessed peace be concluded between your house and his. If you cannot adopt this course, I do not see

how I can help you in any other way. But, as I have said, see to it that you keep the matter secret and to yourself, or you will spoil things for both of us."

Giulietta, who to find Romeo would have gone into a fiery furnace, to say nothing of a sepulchre, implicitly believed all that the friar said, and without another thought consented to his proposal, saying, "Father, I will do all that you tell me, and I place myself in your hands. Never fear that I shall say aught of the thing to any one, for I will keep it a profound secret."

Then the friar hurried back to his room, and brought the damsel a small spoonful of the powder, which he wrapped up in a piece of paper. Giulietta put this in her wallet, and thanked Fra Lorenzo many times, who could scarcely believe that a girl should have such courage and assurance as to let herself be shut up in a tomb with the dead; and he said to her: "Say, now, my daughter, shall you not be afraid of your cousin Tebaldo, who was but lately killed, and who lies in the vault where you will be placed? By this time he must stink horribly." "My father," replied the intrepid damsel, "fear nothing on that score, for if by

suffering the grievous torments of hell I thought I should find Romeo, for me the eternal fire would have no terrors." "So be it, then," answered the friar, "in the name of our Lord God."

Giulietta then joyfully returned to her mother, and as they went home together she said: "Mother dearest, of a truth Fra Lorenzo is a most holy man. With his sweet and pious counsel he has given me such comfort that he has almost dispelled the deep melancholy that oppressed me, and so devoutly did he discourse to me upon the subject of my ailment, that nothing better nor more apt can be imagined." Madame Giovanna noticed that her daughter was more than usually gay, and, hearing this, her joy knew no bounds as she replied, "God bless you, my dearest daughter! Right glad am I to think that you have begun to be of good cheer, and for this we are greatly beholden to our spiritual father. We must be good to him and help him with our alms, for the monastery is poor, and each day he says a prayer to God for us. Bear him often in mind, and send him some goodly alms."

Madame Giovanna really believed that Giulietta by this apparent gaiety had got rid of her

melancholy, so she told this to her husband, who shared her satisfaction thereat, and they both ceased to suspect that she was love-sick for some one, believing that her grief had arisen from her cousin's death, or from some other strange cause. Indeed she seemed over-young to marry, and, if they could have done so with honour, they would willingly have kept her yet for two or three years before getting her a husband. But the contract with the Count was already concluded, and this could not be undone without scandal. A day for the marriage was accordingly fixed, and rich dresses and jewels were got ready for Giulietta to wear. She continued to seem light-hearted and gay, laughing and joking with all, while every hour seemed to her as a thousand years, before that one came for her to drink the potion.

On the evening which preceded the Sunday fixed for her wedding day, the damsel, saying nothing to any one, placed a goblet filled with water at the head of her bed. This was not noticed by her nurse. That night she hardly slept at all, being full of thoughts, and when the dawn drew near, at which time she was to drink

the potion, she pictured Tebaldo to herself as she had seen him, with all the blood streaming from a gash in his throat. She thought how she would have to lie beside him, perhaps upon him, and that in the vault there were many mouldering bodies and bare bones. The fear of it sent a cold shiver through her frame, her every hair stood on end, and for sheer terror she trembled like a leaf in the gale. An icy sweat overspread her limbs, and it seemed to her on a sudden as if she were being torn into pieces by the sheeted dead in that tomb. Then, her fears giving place to courage, she said to herself: "Alas! what is this that I am about to do? Where am I going to let them put me? How shall I bear the noisome stench of Tebaldo's rotting corpse, when at home the least evil smell is unendurable to me? Who knows if some serpent or a thousand other hideous reptiles be not in the tomb—vermin abhorred and loathed by me? If courage fails me to look at them, how shall I bear to have them about me and to feel them touch me? Have I not often heard them say what fearful things happen at night, not only in tombs but also in churches and graveyards?"

This grim fancy brought to her imagination a thousand others more grisly still, and she half determined not to take the powder—in fact, she very nearly scattered it about the floor, being distraught by many strange and conflicting thoughts, some prompting her to take it, and others to reflect upon the hideous perils that would surround her if she did. However, at the last, as the dawn peered forth from her orient balcony, being spurred thereto by her fervent and vivid love for Romeo, which only grew greater in all this trouble, she boldly drank off the potion at a draught; and, lying down, she soon fell asleep.

The old nurse, being in bed with her, had noticed that the girl scarcely slept all night, but she never saw her drink the potion, and, rising, went about her household duties as usual. When the time came for Giulietta to wake, the old crone came back to the room, crying, "Get up, get up! it is time to rise!" and she threw open the windows. Seeing that Giulietta never moved nor made the least sign of rising, she shook her, saying, "Get up, slug-a-bed, get up!" But the good old woman's words fell upon deaf ears. So

she began to shake Giulietta as hard as she could, pulling her by the nose and pinching her, but all her efforts were in vain. The powder had so frozen and fettered her vital spirits that not the loudest, most appalling thunderclaps in the world could have roused her with their tremendous clamour. The old nurse, being horrified to find that the girl was as senseless as a corpse, believed she must be dead, and, weeping bitterly, she ran to find Madame Giovanna, to whom, half hindered by sobs, she cried breathlessly: "Madam, your daughter is dead." The mother rushed, weeping, to the room, and when she found her daughter in this state, needless to say, she was almost overwhelmed with grief. Up to the stars rose her grievous lamentations; they would have touched stones to pity, or softened savage tigers when most wrathful at the loss of their whelps.

The women's cries were now heard all over the house, and every one ran to the bedchamber. Giulietta's father came with the rest, and when he found his girl cold as ice, without any visible sign of life, he was fain to die of grief. The news spread quickly, and soon the whole city

heard of it. Friends and kinsfolk flocked straightway to the house, and the more they came the greater grew the general lamentation. The most famous physicians of the city were instantly summoned, who applied all their most efficacious remedies, but without effect. Then, hearing what life the girl had led for several days, and that during this time she had done nothing but weep and sigh, they all with one opinion declared that she had died suffocated by intense grief. This only served to redouble the universal sorrowing, as all Verona bewailed so cruel and so unforeseen a death; but more than they all the mother mourned, refusing to take any comfort whatever. Three times when embracing her daughter she fainted, and herself seemed like a corpse, so that grief followed grief, and sorrow was added unto sorrow. All the women about her strove as best they might to console her, but she had given reins to her grief in such a way, and had let herself be so transported thereby, that in despair she understood nothing of all that was said to her. All that she did was to weep and to sigh, screaming and tearing her hair like one demented. Messer Antonio was as greatly dis-

tressed as she, though he gave less vent to his grief in tears.

That morning Fra Lorenzo wrote a long letter to Romeo, informing him of the potion scheme and of what had occurred; telling him also that on the following night he would go and bring Giulietta out of the tomb and take her back to his chamber. Romeo must therefore endeavour to come disguised to Verona, and he would wait for him until midnight on the following day, and then they would adopt such measures as might seem to them best. The letter being written and sealed, Fra Lorenzo gave it to a trustworthy friar, with strict injunctions to set out for Mantua that very day and find Romeo Montecchio. To him he was to deliver the letter, but to no other person, whoever he might be.

The friar started off and reached Mantua early in the day, dismounting at the Franciscan convent. Having put up his horse, he asked the Father Superior to let him have a companion to take him about the city and help him to do his business. But he discovered that shortly before one of the friars of this convent had died, and there was just a suspicion that his death was

due to the plague. The health officers unanimously declared him a victim to this disease, and they were the more certain of this because in his groin was found a tumour much bigger than an egg—proof positive that he had died of this pestilent malady. So it chanced that just as the Veronese friar was asking for a companion, the health officers arrived and ordered the Father Superior under grave penalties to let no one go forth from the convent. The friar protested that he had only just arrived from Verona, and had not associated with any one in the convent. But his protests were vain, and he was perforce obliged to remain there with the other friars, so that he never gave that blessed letter to Romeo, nor sent him any message, which brought about the direst evil and scandal, as you shall hear anon.

Meanwhile in Verona they prepared solemn funeral obsequies for the damsel whom all believed to be dead, and they decided that the burial should take place late that evening. On hearing of Giulietta's death, Pietro, Romeo's servant, was filled with consternation, and he decided to go to Mantua, but after the funeral;

so that he might tell his master that he had actually seen her dead. He resolved to start from Verona and ride all night, reaching Mantua when the gates were opened. Accordingly, at late evening, amid the grief of the whole city, Giulietta was borne on a bier towards San Francesco, the pomp of her train being swelled by all the clerical and civic dignitaries of Verona. Distress at the sad event had so dazed Pietro, who knew how passionately his master loved the girl, that he never thought of speaking to Fra Lorenzo, as he usually did. Had he seen the friar, he would have heard about the sleeping-draught, and, by telling Romeo, would have averted all the ills that ensued. Being well assured that it was Giulietta whom they carried on the bier, he mounted his horse and rode at a good rate to Villafranca, where he stopped a while for rest and refreshment. Then, starting again two hours before daybreak, he reached Mantua at sunrise, and went to his master's house.

Let us now go back to Verona. When the damsel had been brought into the church and over her bier the customary solemn service for

the dead had been chanted, about the midmost hour of the night she was laid in the vault. This was of marble and very spacious, being situated in the graveyard outside the church, one side of it touching the wall, with an enclosed space adjoining, where, when another corpse was laid in the vault, the bones of those previously interred were flung. When the vault was opened, Fra Lorenzo dragged Tebaldo's body to one side of it, and after it had been swept and made clean he had the damsel gently placed therein, with a little pillow at her head. Then he closed the tomb.

On reaching the house, Pietro found his master in bed, and for grievous sobs and tears could say not a word when presenting himself before him. This greatly astonished Romeo, who, thinking of ills other than those which had actually occurred, said: "How now, Pietro? What is amiss? What news do you bring me from Verona? How goes it with my father and the rest of our family? Speak, nor keep me longer in suspense. What can it be that grieves you thus? Quick, tell me!"

Then Pietro, giving vent to his emotion, in broken accents told him of Giulietta's death, and

how he himself had seen her borne to the sepulchre, her death, as they said, being due to grief. The dread news nearly drove Romeo out of his mind, and, leaping from his bed in a frenzy, he cried: "Ah! traitorous Romeo, perfidious, disloyal, and of all men most ungrateful! Not grief it is that has slain your lady-love, for of grief one dies not, but it is you, cruel man, you that have been her executioner; you have been her assassin; you have done her to death! She herself wrote to you that she would die rather than become another's bride, and besought you to take her away at all hazards from her father's house. But you, ungrateful one, laggard in love, and wretched mongrel that you are, you gave her your word that you would go and do everything, and bade her be of good cheer, while from day to day you put it off, never resolving to do her will. Now you have chosen to stay with your hands at your girdle; and Giulietta is dead. Dead she is; and you are alive! Oh! traitor, how often did you write it to her, and with your own lips tell her that you could not live without her! But you are living at this moment. Where, think you, is she? There in twilight beyond the

grave she wanders, waiting for you to follow, as to herself she exclaims: 'Ah, what a liar, what a false lover and faithless husband is this! for at the news of my death he yet can bear to remain alive!' Forgive me, oh, forgive me, my own dearest wife, for I confess my very grievous sin. As, however, my immeasurable grief may not for all its poignancy deprive me of life, myself I will do its work, and slay myself with mine own hand!"

Then he grasped the sword hanging near the bed's head, and, wrenching it from its scabbard, set the point of the blade at his heart. But Pietro was quick enough to prevent him from wounding himself, and disarmed him in a trice, snatching the sword from his hand, as, like a faithful servant, he respectfully chid his master for such madness, bidding him take comfort and live, as the dead girl was beyond all human help. The dreadful news had so stupefied Romeo, that, as it were, he became like stone or marble, while never a tear fell from his eyes. Looking at him, one might have thought it was a statue, not a man. But ere long tears came in torrents, and then he resembled a fountain where water welled

in abundance. And the words that, thus weeping, he uttered, might have moved pity in the hearts of barbarians, however hard or adamantine these might be. When the first bitterness of his grief was spent, Romeo, swayed by passion, began to give way to evil and desperate thoughts, and, since his darling Giulietta was dead, he determined nowise to remain alive. But of this dire intent he said not a word, hiding what was in his mind, so that by no servant nor another he might be hindered from carrying out his scheme. To Pietro, who was with him in the room, he gave injunctions to say nothing to any one of Giulietta's death, but bade him get two fresh horses saddled, as he was going back to Verona.

"I want you," said he, "to go on first, as fast as you can, saying nothing to any one, and when you reach Verona do not tell my father that I am coming, but try and get picks and other iron tools necessary for opening the vault in which my wife is buried. For I shall arrive at Verona late to-night, and will go straight to your cottage at the back of our orchard. About the third or fourth hour of the night we will go to the grave-

yard, for I would fain look once more upon my hapless wife as she lies there, dead. Then, all unrecognised, I will quit Verona betimes, you following me a little way after; and we will both return hither."

Accordingly, soon after this Pietro started, and Romeo wrote a letter to his father, asking pardon for marrying without his permission, setting forth in full the story of his love and of his marriage. He also tenderly besought him to have a solemn service for the dead said at Giulietta's grave, as if it were for his daughter-in-law, and make this service a perpetual one by endowing it with the revenues which he (Romeo) possessed, as certain property had come to him from an aunt who, dying, had made him her heir. For Pietro also Romeo made such provision that he could live in ease without depending upon others for support. These two things he most urgently requested of his father, declaring it to be his last wish, and, as his aunt had died a few days before, he begged his father to give the first-fruits of her property to the poor. Sealing this letter, he put it in his bosom, and, taking a phial full of deadly poison, he dressed himself like a German and mounted

his horse, telling the folk of his house that next day he would soon return.

So he set out for Verona, travelling at great speed, and got there at the hour of the *Ave Maria.* He at once went to look for Pietro, who was at home, and had done all that he had been told to do. About the fourth hour of the night they both started for San Francesco, taking all necessary tools with them, and on reaching Giulietta's tomb they adroitly opened it and propped up the lid. Romeo had told Pietro to bring a dark lantern with him, which helped them not a little in their work. Entering the tomb, Romeo saw his darling wife lying there, to all appearance cold and dead. At the sight he swooned, and sank down at her side overcome with grief. Then, recovering himself, he tenderly kissed and embraced her, bathing her face with scalding tears, as sobs choked his utterance. But after a long spell of weeping he found his voice, and spoke words that must have touched the hardest of hard hearts to pity.

As he had resolved to be quit of life, he took the phial containing the poison, and putting it to his lips drained it at one draught.

Then he called to Pietro, who kept watch in a corner of the graveyard, and bade him approach. So Pietro, climbing up, leaned over the mouth of the tomb, when Romeo thus addressed him:

"Listen, Pietro; my wife lies here, and you partly know how much I loved and still do love her. I felt that it was as impossible for me to live without her as for a body to exist without a soul, and so I brought poison with me—snake-water, which, as you know, can kill a man in less than an hour. This of my own free will I have drunk, so as to die here by the side of her whom living I so dearly loved; and though in life I was not allowed to be with her, I shall at least lie beside her in the grave. See, here is the phial, which, if you recollect, we got of the Spoletine in Mantua—the fellow that had those live asps and snakes. Of His pity and infinite goodness may God pardon me, for not to offend against Him have I slain myself, but because without my dear wife I could not live. And if you see these eyes of mine full of tears, not for my lost youth do I weep, but because I grieve for her death — she deserved to live a happier, more tranquil life. Give this letter to my father;

I have written to him that which I wish done after my death; also about my burial here, and concerning my servants at Mantua. For you, who have served me so faithfully, I have made such provision that henceforth you will not need to become the servant of another; and I am sure that my father will carry out all my wishes to the letter. Now, get you hence, for death, I feel, is near; the poison overcomes me, and every limb grows numb. So, do you close the lid of the tomb, and leave me to die by my dear one's side." At these words Pietro felt as if, for very grief, his heart would break. All his remonstrances were vain, for there was no remedy against the poison, which now had gained hold of all parts of Romeo's body. Taking Giulietta in his arms, the lover kissed her unceasingly, and disposed himself to die, while again telling Pietro to shut down the lid.

Just then Giulietta woke, as the effect of the powder had passed off. Feeling herself kissed, she thought it was the friar, who in a moment of carnal impulse was embracing her as he bore her back to his chamber. So she said, "Alas! Fra Lorenzo, is this how you prove the trust

that Romeo placed in you? Back, I say!" Then, as she struggled to free herself from his grasp, her eyes opened, and she found that he who embraced her was Romeo. Although he wore a German dress, she knew him well, and exclaimed: "Oh! my dear heart, is it you? Where is Fra Lorenzo? Why do you not bring me out of this tomb? Let us go away, for God's sake!"

At the sight of her eyes and the sound of her voice, Romeo knew of a certainty that Giulietta was not dead but verily alive, and he felt at once tremendous gladness and measureless, unspeakable grief. Straining her to his bosom, he cried, "Oh life of my life, and dearest heart of mine, what man has ever felt a joy like this which now possesses me? For I firmly believed you to be dead, but behold! I clasp you alive and safe in my arms! Yet what grief may match my grief? What torturing pain can vie with that which fills my heart, as I feel myself reach the end of all my dolorous days, and as life slips from me now, when most I need it? For at the most I cannot live more than half-an-hour! What mortal ever felt at one and the same moment such rapturous joy and such infinite

grief? Though, dearest consort, I rejoice unspeakably that you are come back to life, incomparable sorrow covers me as I think that all too soon I may no longer see you, nor hear your voice, nor stay near you to enjoy your sweet company. But the gladness at your return to life far exceeds the sorrow at my own approaching death, and I pray the Lord God to give you those years of my hapless youth which now He takes away from me, letting you live long and have a far happier fate than mine, whose life, as I feel, now touches its close."

Then Giulietta replied: "What is this, love, that you say? Do you come from Mantua to comfort me with such news? What is it that ails you?" Then Romeo told her how he had drunk the poison, and she exclaimed: "Alas! and woe is me! What awful thing is this you tell me? Fra Lorenzo never wrote to you of the plan which he and I had made? He promised me that he would inform you of it all by letter!" And in her anguish the despairing damsel wept and shrieked, being well-nigh beside herself, as she told Romeo all that had befallen, and all that she and the friar had arranged.

As thus she grieved, Romeo spied Tebaldo's corpse, and, turning to it, said: "Wherever now you be, Tebaldo, know this, that I never sought your harm. I joined the fray as a peace-maker, and to exhort you to get your men to withdraw, making my folk also lay down their arms. Yet, full of rage and ancient hatred, you cared nothing for my words, but with dire intent attacked me. Forced thereto, I lost patience, never ceding an inch, but, standing on my defence, as ill-luck would have it, I slew you. Now, for the harm I did your body, I crave your forgiveness, the more so as I was to have become your kinsman, by marrying this your cousin. If vengeance is what you desired, behold, you have it now. What greater vengeance would you have than to know that he who killed you has now poisoned himself in your presence, and dies here by his own hand, being buried with you in your tomb? Though in life we fought, in death we shall rest at peace in the self-same grave."

At these dolorous speeches Pietro, listening, became like a statue hewn out of marble. He knew not if he heard aright, or if he dreamed. Then Giulietta said to Romeo: "Since it has not

pleased God that we should live together, may it please Him at least that I be buried with you in the tomb, for be sure that, come what may, I will never go hence without you." Romeo again embraced her, and, comforting her, besought her to live, that thus he might die happy in the belief that she would remain alive. Many things did he say to her, until, as strength and sight gradually failed him, he grew so weak that he sank down on the ground, and with his eyes turned piteously towards his sorrowing wife exclaimed, "Alas! dear heart! I die."

Now, for some reason or another, Fra Lorenzo did not wish to bear Giulietta to his chamber on the night of her burial, but next night, seeing that Romeo did not come, he went to the tomb with a trusty friar of his order, bringing tools wherewith to open it. He got there just as Romeo sank down in his death-agony. Seeing the tomb open, and recognising Pietro, he said: "Ho, there! where is Romeo?" Giulietta heard him, and cried: "May God forgive you for not sending the letter to Romeo!" "I did send it," replied the friar; "Fra Anselmo took it: you know him. Why do you speak thus?" "Come

into this place and you shall see," answered Giulietta, weeping bitterly.

The friar entered, where Romeo lay half dead, and he said: "Romeo, my son, what is it? what ails you?" Then, with a languid look, Romeo recognised him, and bade him take care of Giulietta, since he was now past all living help or counsel; and, repenting him of all his sins, he craved forgiveness of him as of God. So saying, he feebly beat his breast, and then his eyes closed, and he lay there, dead.

In excess of grief Giulietta fell senseless upon her husband's body, and remained for some while in a deep swoon. The friar and Pietro sought to revive her, and when she regained consciousness she gave vent to her tears as she kissed the corpse, and exclaimed: "Oh fairest home of all my thoughts and of my pleasures! my one and only darling lord, from being sweet how are you now become bitter! You have ended your course while yet in the flower of your lovely and pleasant youth, caring nothing for a life that all others held so dear. You wished to die at a time when others most long to live, reaching that end to which sooner or later all must come. Oh,

my lord, you came to die in the arms of her whom most you loved, and who loved you with a matchless love, for, thinking her dead and buried, you of your own free will were for burying yourself with her. Never did you deem that these her tears would fall for you; never did you think to pass over to the other world and not find her there. But soon, love, soon will I come to you, and stay with you for evermore!"

Distressed at her anguish, the friar and Pietro did all they could to comfort her, but in vain; and Fra Lorenzo said at last: "My daughter, what is done cannot be undone. If mourning could bring back Romeo from the grave, one and all we would dissolve ourselves in tears, that so we might succour him; but for this thing no remedy exists. Take heart; be comforted, and hold on to life; if you desire not to return to your home, I will find shelter for you in a nunnery, where, in the service of God, you can pray for the soul of your Romeo." However, she would on no account listen to him; but, being resolved to die, she checked within her all her vital forces, and, embracing Romeo once more, straightway expired.

As the friars and Pietro were busied with the dead girl, believing that she had swooned, the sergeants of the watch came along, and, seeing a light in the tomb, they all hurried thither, to seize Pietro and his companions. On being told the sad story, they left the two friars strongly guarded, and brought Pietro before Signor Bartolomeo, the Governor, and told him under what circumstances they had arrested him. Signor Bartolomeo caused the tale of the hapless lovers to be minutely narrated to him, and, as dawn had now come, he rose and went out to view the bodies.

The report of the tragedy soon spread throughout all Verona, so that young and old flocked forthwith to the vault. Pietro and the friars were set at liberty, and the burial of the two lovers took place with great pomp, amid the great grief of the whole city. The Governor desired that they should be buried in the same grave, and this caused a peace to be made between the Montecchi and Capelletti, though it did not last very long.

OF a trick played upon the Prior of Modena and his monks by an ass which got into the church one night.

YOU must know that in the venerable convent of St. Domenico at Modena (Fra Agostino Moro being prior at that time, as doubtless you are aware) there happened to be an excellent preacher on the third day of Easter. All through Lent he had preached to the general satisfaction of the whole city, and was now about to take leave of his congregation with such rites and ceremonies as preachers commonly adopt. When it got about that this was the Father's farewell sermon, all folk flocked to the church, so that it seemed as if the day were one of plenary indulgence. So hot and stifling had the church become with the crowd and the breath of so many men and women, that when the sermon was over (it had lasted from dinner-time to four o'clock) the friars found it passing difficult to chant vespers and compline together.

Being a shrewd and thoughtful person, the sacristan opened all the doors and windows of the church to cool the air, waiting as long as he could before closing the great door, especially as at nightfall they were to bury there a man of very foul reputation, to whom, when dying, as all averred, the devil had appeared in the flesh, so that they thought he would be carried away, soul and body. When the funeral rites for this arch-sinner were ended, the sacristan closed the central door of the church, but left the one leading to the first cloister open, so that the church might grow cooler during the night.

That same evening a friar arrived who had been preaching in the mountains, and brought his baggage with him upon a little ass as black as pitch, which he put up in a stable hard by. But, while all slept, the donkey, I know not how, got out of the stable and strayed into the cloister, where the grass was rich and tender. Here it stopped for a while to eat its fill. Then, being thirsty perhaps, it went sniffing about till it spied the vessel containing holy water, and drank it all up, as the friars next day discovered. Having eaten and drunk, it approached the grave of the

wicked man, which had been filled in with sand, and, after turning round several times, stretched itself out there to rest.

Now, at the first stroke of matins, it is usual for novices to go to the choir and set books and candles in readiness for chanting the service. So, at the time stated, two boys came in to prepare all that was necessary, and, passing through the sacristy, they saw Master Jackass stretched out upon the grave. His eyes looked like two great burning coals, while his long ears seemed for all the world like a pair of horns. Darkness, that fosterer and ally of fear, the thought of the newly-buried sinner, and the sight of so horrible a brute at such an hour fairly robbed the poor timid lads of their senses, and they firmly believed that the beast was none other than the devil. So, in their terror, they fled as fast as their legs would carry them; and he who ran swiftest deemed himself very lucky. On reaching the dormitory, breathless and speechless, they met some of the friars going to the choir, among these being the master of the novices. Seeing by the light that burns all night long in the dormitory that the boys had come back, he asked them why they had not

gone to prepare for matins, when in great fear and trembling they told him that on the grave of the man buried overnight they had actually seen the enemy of mankind.

The good monk, by no means the most courageous of men, began to tremble with fear, uncertain whether to go down into the church or not. Just then Fra Giovanni Mascarello came up, leader of the choir, and an excellent musician. Hearing the lads' story, he boldly ran down and went into the church. Here he saw the brute crouched on the grave, with ears erect because of the noise it heard, and, quickly turning his back to it, he slammed the door of the sacristy and rushed upstairs, screaming at the top of his voice, "*Patres miei*, it is indeed the devil, the enemy of mankind." This he repeated again and again. As you know, he has a very powerful voice, and he shouted so loud that there was not a friar in the convent who did not hear him. At last the Prior came out of his cell, and, approaching Fra Giovanni, said, "What folly is this that you say? Are you raving mad, or what is it? Be still, and do not make such a noise at this hour. In God's name what is the

matter?" "Holy Father," replied Fra Giovanni, "I am not raving mad, but I tell you that the devil is in the church, and with my own eyes I actually saw him on the grave of that wicked man whom we buried yester-eve. Methinks he has come to bear away the sinner's body with him to hell! These lads, here, have seen him also."

Having questioned the boys, who confirmed this statement, the Prior, with some of the monks whom the outcry had brought thither, went down into the church. Their imaginations being excited by what they had heard, at the sight of the ass they all firmly believed that it was the Prince of Devils. So, quaking with fear, each made the sign of the cross and went back to the sacristy, whereupon the Prior, after brief consultation with the friars, had the big bell rung, which brought all the inmates of the monastery together, when he exhorted them to be of good courage and not to dread this devilish apparition. Emboldened by this speech, the friars went in a body to the sacristy, where they donned their sacred vestments, and took all the relics they possessed, so that each bore some holy thing in

his hand. Then, the cross going before, they marched forth in procession, chanting with great fervour the *Salve Regina.* But Master Jackass remained completely at his ease through it all, never budging an inch from his self-chosen position. Few of the friars were brave enough to look at the brute, being firmly convinced that it was the devil, while none of them had the least idea that it was a donkey. When the *Salve Regina* had been sung and the beast showed no signs of moving, the Prior called for the book of exorcisms, which is used to drive out evil spirits from the bodies of those possessed, and he then read all those holy words which are meet on such emergencies, yet for all this master donkey never stirred.

At last the Prior took the sprinkler used for holy water, and coming somewhat closer to the brute he raised his hand, and making the sign of the Cross, began to sprinkle holy water, never perceiving that the foul fiend of his imagination was none other than an ass. So he soused him soundly two or three times, when, either because the water was cold or because he thought the sprinkling stick would hit him (for he saw

the Prior continually raise his hand as if about to beat him), Master Neddy stood up on all fours and brayed with hideous vigour. By this ludicrous signal he proved to the Prior and the monks that he was not Satan after all, but an ass. The good friars were filled with confusion, not knowing what to say nor what to do. But the whole thing ended in loud laughter, as it seemed to them a mighty joke that young and old, philosophers and theologians, should one and all have been thus mocked by an ass.

PANDOLFO DEL NERO is buried alive with his lady-love, and escapes from such peril by a strange chance.

THERE lived once in Rimini a wealthy young man of noble birth named Pandolfo del Nero, who was so passionately in love with a lady of that city that he could hardly remain a single hour without seeing her. Her name was Francesca, and she was the wife of a rich gentleman somewhat older in years than she altogether desired. Pandolfo never ceased to importune her with letters and messages, until at last she began to listen to him, and, as the good-looking young man pleased her much, it was not long before she contrived, with her nurse's aid, to meet him. If he loved her before, Pandolfo now burned hotly for his darling Francesca, while she, in like fashion, found life impossible without him, and heaped a thousand curses upon the hour which had given her as bride to so decrepit a

man. Loving each other thus in this unbridled way, Pandolfo often ran the risk of death in order to see his mistress, while she never missed a chance of meeting him, caring naught about her own life, if only she could manage to be with her lover.

For nearly two years they went on in this way, meeting each other whenever they could, while in heat and intensity their passion seemed ever to increase. Then all at once Francesca fell dangerously sick of a distressing flux, which in a short time became so severe that the doctors gave out that she could not live long, but that any day, while in the act of speaking, she might die.

Her poor old husband, who loved her deeply, left nothing undone which might cure her, and spared no expense to bring thither the most famous doctors from Bologna. But all proved in vain, as Francesca grew daily worse, her life melting away like snow before the sun. When he heard what mortal danger threatened his lady-love, Pandolfo was half dead of grief, knowing not which way to turn, being convinced that, if she died, he would detest life. So, by the maid who knew of their love, he contrived

to send a message of comfort to his mistress, beseeching her for his sake to take heart and endeavour to regain her health. Such words of greeting and solace brought to the lady marvellous delight, for she loved Pandolfo more than her very life; and death, as it seemed to her, would not be so distasteful if only she could stay with him and hear his voice. In proportion as her vital forces waned, great jealousy possessed her as she thought that when she was gone some other lady might take her pleasure of Pandolfo; indeed, this tormented her far more than the actual thought of death. Then she went on imagining how chance might let them both die together and be buried in company. Haunted by this idea, she determined to speak to Pandolfo before she died, in the hope that there should happen what really did happen.

In her chamber there was a chest large enough to hold a man, which had been put there in order to hide her lover in case they should be surprised. Pandolfo, in fact, had frequently concealed himself in it for four or five hours at a time. The lid of it, when once shut, could not be raised without using a key, and in it there

were holes to admit air. Francesca kept her most precious things in this chest. After much thought, she sent a message to Pandolfo, begging him to visit her on the following night. To the youth such a proposal was infinitely delightful, and, at the hour fixed, he went to the house, being admitted by the nurse, who soon led him to the lady's chamber. Since Francesca's illness her husband used to sleep on the ground floor, and at times in the night would come or send to see how his wife was, taking care that she had all she needed. Being desirous to speak at length and at her leisure with Pandolfo, before he came, she tried to appear somewhat better, saying that she would have no other waiting-woman with her that night but the nurse; so they two remained together alone.

When, soon afterwards, Pandolfo came in, full many were the tears they shed before the lovers could utter a word. At length, amid kisses and sobs, the lady, sighing deeply, said, "Pandolfo, dear heart of mine, and the goal of my every desire, tell me truly, shall you not be grieved at my death? Shall you not regret that no longer you may return to your Francesca?"

"What is this you say?" rejoined her lover, weeping. "Soul of me, and my one and only joy, do you, then, doubt my love? If with my life or with a thousand other lives I could save yours, be sure that I would stake them all, so that yours were but won. And if, though God forbid, if it chance that you die of this malady, indeed I know not what I shall do, for at the mere thought of it I feel as if I must lose my life also. Yet be comforted and of good cheer, for to such a pass you are not yet come, and for this malady some cure may yet be found. You are young, and youth survives the utmost perils of sickness; look forward then to recovery, and be of good heart."

"Pandolfo, dearest," replied the lady, "my life is gone, and what little remains to me is so feeble that it seems even as naught. Insensibly I feel my vital forces ebbing away little by little—dispersed like mist before the breeze. God knows that, except for you, it grieves me not to die; but at the thought of leaving you here without me, and that, in time, some other woman shall possess you, such bitter anguish fills me, that, compared therewith, death has for me no pain.

Could I but find a way for us both to die at the same moment, so that, united in life by love, in death we might be buried together in the same grave! Were I but sure of this, I should die content."

Whereupon Pandolfo, weeping, besought her to put aside such thoughts, for that she would recover, and there would be ample time for them to live a merry life together. In this way he endeavoured to comfort her to the best of his power.

As thus with tears and sighs the lovers spoke of these and other matters, the husband rose shortly after midnight to visit his sick wife, as the doctors had told him that she was gradually sinking.

The nurse heard him calling to the servants for lights to show him upstairs, and she at once told the lovers, and went to meet her master so that she might keep him talking, and so give Pandolfo time to get out of the house in the usual way. The door she had left open, for which her mistress had had keys made like those belonging to the master of the house. At this news Pandolfo was for escaping there and then,

but the lady, who saw that all was happening as she had planned it, begged him to hide in the chest, so that when the husband had gone away again they might continue their talk. Being only too anxious to talk yet awhile with his love, Pandolfo jumped into the chest, which closed of itself as soon as the lid was down. Immediately afterwards, the husband came up, having already learnt from the maid that her mistress had been sleeping peacefully. On entering the room, he went straight to the bed and asked his wife how she felt. She replied that, although she had rested somewhat, she still thought that she would not live much longer, for she felt that she was gradually sinking. Her husband then comforted her, beseeching her to be of good heart, and said that her having rested was an excellent sign. So, with many words, he tried to cheer her as best he could.

The nurse meanwhile, who believed that Pandolfo had got away, went to lock the house-door, and, on coming back to the sick-chamber, she was told by her mistress to wait without. Then Francesca said to her husband: "Dear husband mine, whom I have loved without limit, as you

see, I have now come to the end of my life, a pass which we all sooner or later must reach, as none are privileged by God to remain perpetually in life. During the few years of our companionship, I have always thought that you loved me fervently, and that you have ever tried to please me, seeing that all I wanted from you has been freely granted, nor was aught that I asked denied to me. And in this my last hour I am fain to think that you will do likewise. For this very reason I am more bold to ask a favour of you, and tenderly beseech you to grant it, claiming your word as a solemn pledge that you will do this. What say you?"

"My dearest wife," answered the husband, "pray put these fancies about dying out of your head, and be of good cheer, for I hope that you may recover. Nevertheless I will always pledge you my word of honour that you shall ask nothing of me within my power but I will do it; so ask freely anything which you think I can perform; nor shall it be a vain request, for I am fain to content you, even though it were done with my very blood."

"Then I beg you," said she, "that, when I am

dead (which will soon be), you cause that chest yonder to be placed in the tomb with me where I am buried. In it are baubles and trinkets which have no value; in fact, they are hardly worth ten florins. The chest is locked, and it only needs to be carried to the grave with me. If you will grant me this favour, I shall die perfectly content."

The husband, who dearly loved his wife, swore to please her in this as in any other thing which he could possibly do, never imagining for an instant that the chest held aught but some of her clothes and sundry women's trinkets that perhaps she did not wish to have seen.

What shall we say of poor Pandolfo, who, shut fast within the chest, had heard everything? How true is that saying: "Happy he who loves a discreet woman, and luckless indeed is he who chances to fall in with a mistress both foolish and ill-bred!" Here was the hapless lover between anvil and hammer; for, if he remained silent, he saw himself buried alive, with never a hope of rescue, while, if he discovered himself, he would certainly be torn limb from limb, as he belonged to a party hostile to that of the lady's

husband. Moreover, there was the added injury of having enrolled messire as a citizen of Cuckoldstown. A thousand thoughts passed through his head, but he could imagine no possible means of escape. Finally, being caught like a rat in a trap, he resolved to choose the lesser evil and die patiently where he was, in the chest. I have often thought myself, gentlemen, over this predicament of his, and am persuaded that Francesca, being in this melancholy state, cared little if her lover were suffocated in the chest or killed by his enemies, so long as she got her wish, and could die happy in the knowledge that Pandolfo did not live on after her. God guard us all from such crazy females!

Now, when the lady had got her husband's solemn promise, which assured her that Pandolfo would be buried with her, she determined to live no longer, and, endeavouring to repress what little vitality remained to her, she sought to hold her breath as long as possible; and soon afterwards, making no answer to what her husband said to her, she expired. Sorely did he bemourn her death, with great lamenting, and ordered her burial to take place on the following evening.

When day came, kinsfolk and friends arrived to condole with the husband upon the loss of his wife, and to help in making arrangements for the funeral. Being resolved to carry out Francesca's wish with regard to the chest, he told some of his relatives about the matter. They one and all thought that he should have the chest opened, as something might be found inside which it would be wrong to bury. But he, being anxious to keep the word pledged to his dead wife, would on no account let the box be opened.

When evening came, the body was lifted up and the chest carried out after it, amid the intense astonishment of the whole city. When Pandolfo felt himself being lifted up, and heard them chanting the *Requiem æternam*, there is little need to ask what feelings were his. More than once he very nearly screamed out and revealed himself, thus abandoning his resolve to die patiently. But being convinced that the mourners one and all would cut him into a thousand shreds, love for his dead lady overcame him, and he resolved to accept his fate in silence for her sake, that so in death he might not defame her whom, living, he had so dearly loved.

Therefore, he let himself be borne along to the venerable church of San Cataldo, which belongs to the Preaching Friars, and, as they chanted the burial service over the body, the chest was placed in a corner of the vault, which was somewhat spacious. Then the coffin was laid there also. As night had come and it was very dark, they did not stay to close the entrance of the tomb with cement, but only placed the top-stone thereon, intending to fasten all properly on the morrow.

When poor Pandolfo felt himself buried alive, he groped about in the chest until he found various things wrapped up in linen cloths, yet he troubled not to look what they were, being merely desirous to meet his death as painlessly as might be. As we have said, there were certain holes in the lid of the chest, yet, though a little air entered the vault, as it was badly closed, he felt his breathing grow more and more difficult, while there was a noisome stench from all the damp round about. Then God, who had more pity for Pandolfo than ever he had had for himself, appointed a way of rescue after this manner. The dead lady's nephew had heard from the

nurse that all her precious jewels and ornaments were to be buried with her, and, when the funeral was over, he went to two of his comrades and told them what he meant to do, when they readily offered to help him. Accordingly, some little time before the friars rose for matins, the young men found a way of getting into the convent, and thence into the church. As the tombstone had not yet been properly fastened, they easily removed this. Pandolfo, half stifled, heard their noise and was much cheered, for he guessed what would happen.

As soon as the stone was moved, the nephew and one of his companions entered the vault, and with tools that they had brought broke open the chest. Hardly did he feel the lock broken than Pandolfo leapt up in a great fury, trembling fearfully, and uttering strange cries, so that the two young men rushed out of the vault in a trice, and fled as fast as their legs would carry them, following their comrade, who, waiting outside, had already taken to his heels through sheer fright. You may well think how glad Pandolfo was at the rare piece of luck that had set him free. Coming out of the sepulchre, he

took a torch like those that they light when the priest upraises the Body of Christ, and, going back, was fain to look once more upon the face of his dead lady. Then, searching the chest, he found chains and rings of gold that were hers, besides a goodly sum of money. All this he took, and after shutting the chest went out of the tomb, placing the stone at its mouth as before, with the help of an iron bar lying there. Then he made his way out of the church and the convent, through the friars' garden, and got back to his own home, where he remained many days without letting any one see him, for, as it seemed to him, he was still shut up in the tomb. It is my firm belief that if he ever fell in love again with any woman, he was wise enough not to let himself run such risks, for indeed they are not of the sort to be frequently encountered; and all should beware of loving women who hold their own ungoverned appetites more dear than their gallants' lives.

OF the Judge of Lucca's intrigue with a lady, and how he causes her husband to be put in prison; together with sundry incidents.

AT the time when Pietro Gambacorta governed Pisa there lived a youth of noble birth named Buonaccorsio Gualando. He had neither father nor mother, and, full of a passion far beyond his years, he fell deeply in love with Beatrice the daughter of Neri Malletti, who, though but a little girl, was equally enamoured of him. When Buonaccorsio came back from school, he used to try and see Beatrice and stay with her if possible, yet, being both mere children, their relatives thought nothing of such intimacy, as the lad was about twelve, and the girl barely ten years old. Buonaccorsio's kinsfolk, under whose guardianship he was, saw that he made good progress in grammar and was most intelligent, so they decided to send

him to Siena, then famous as a centre for the study of civil law.

Accordingly they told him of their decision, pointing out that, though he belonged to an ancient and noble family which was among the first in Pisa, he had no great fortune, so that he must use his talents to support his rank. The boy saw that what they said was true, and he expressed himself ready to do what they might appoint. Yet when he thought that he would have to part from Beatrice he felt a strange torment at his heart, and he went to tell her of what his guardians purposed to do, and of the sore grief that was his. Beatrice wept bitterly at the news, the lad joining her in such lamentation; and so with childish embraces each drank the other's scalding tears. They made vows of eternal love, and all the time that Buonaccorsio stayed in Pisa they managed to be together. The youth had a servant, to whom (Beatrice knowing of it) he gave secret instructions to forward his letters to her and despatch hers to him, at Siena. The time for departure now came, and Buonaccorsio went to Siena, where his guardians kept him for three years before he returned to Pisa. His Beatrice remained ever

present in his memory, and he often wrote to her, as she to him, for love taught her to use the pen right well. Indeed, love waxed ever greater in both as they grew older, and so in this interchange of letters three years passed. When at vacation time the lad came home, he found that his Beatrice had become far more beautiful than before; in fact she was passing fair, having a sweet gentleness and charm that made her without an equal in all Pisa. Buonaccorsio saw her at a window, and so bewitching was her loveliness that it completely astounded him. As they had now both grown up, they were no longer allowed to be such intimate companions as of yore, and this caused the lovers bitter grief of heart. Yet Love, that never leaves his pursuivants without some sort of help, opened their eyes and showed them where they might talk together in a lonely pathway at the back of Beatrice's house, out of a window at no great distance from the ground. This window lighted a place where firewood and other things for the house were kept, and there were also two great vats there for making wine. Now and again Beatrice used to come here and enjoy a talk at her ease with Buonaccorsio. The

love that had begun for them when boy and girl now burned in another fashion at their hearts; so passionate indeed was this attachment that they were fain to taste those deeper amorous joys which lovers ever ardently seek; yet for such pleasure opportunity did not serve.

Love thus ever grew with the advancing years, and when the vacations were ended Buonaccorsio returned to Siena, remaining there for another three years before coming back to Pisa. Shortly before his arrival Neri Malletti gave his daughter in marriage to a citizen of Lucca, one Fridiano Z. Hearing this, Buonaccorsio fell into such a melancholy state that in his very despair he thought of becoming a Franciscan friar; indeed he had already spoken of this to the Father Superior at Siena, and had fixed a time for donning the monkish dress, when he received a letter from Beatrice. In it she said that being forced into marriage by her father she could not say no, but that she loved her Buonaccorsio more than ever, and, having now greater freedom than formerly, she would contrive ways and means to meet him if he could but manage to come to Lucca. She besought him the more to do this, as in those

first few days of marriage she had, as she thought, already discovered that her husband was a dullard.

The young fellow was in a measure cheered by this letter, and he read and re-read it again and again. He repented him of his wish to turn friar, and after hard study passed his final examinations with high honours, obtaining the degree of Doctor of Civil Law. He then came to Pisa, where he won further distinctions, and, not being able to put the beautiful Beatrice out of his thoughts, he determined to do his utmost to obtain the appointment of Criminal Judge at Lucca, a post of much authority and esteem. Accordingly, with the influence of kinsfolk and friends he was at last elected judge for the period of two years, which to Beatrice as to himself proved a source of infinite content. The election being over, he got all things necessary for him in making an honourable appearance, and in the month of January he went to Lucca, where with due pomp he took possession of his office, administering justice in such a way that he soon gained the favour of the whole city. Here at Lucca he was able to see Beatrice almost every day, and being both of

them desirous to renew their intimacy, the lady, by bribing two of her maids, found a way to make an assignation with her lover when Fridiano, the husband, was away in the country; and it was then that their long and fervent love had its reward. If before affectionate, my lord the judge fell now head over ears in love, for he found Beatrice far more delightful and charming than he had at first believed, while her attachment to him increased in a like degree, so that the little love she had ever felt for her husband now gave place to absolute repugnance.

Now, as in this intrigue they were somewhat indiscreet, Fridiano became very jealous of Beatrice's admirer. He noticed that he was an extremely good-looking young man, and that he passed along the street every day. It also seemed to him that Beatrice, when she saw the young judge, grew unwontedly gay and met him with a merry smile, so that Fridiano often came to harsh words with his wife about this, telling her that she was carrying on a love-intrigue with Buonaccorsio, and that by the Body of Christ he would soon show her what he meant to do. Knowing just what he was worth, the lady made

him a sharp answer, reproaching him for such accusations, which were utterly false, as my lord the judge came there to pay court to a widow, their neighbour, of whom he was enamoured. The matter, however, must not be spoken of, to save the lady's good name from injury. Beatrice also said that, if her husband had such a bad opinion of her, he might watch her closely to see if she did wrong, in which case he could do with her just what he liked. Albeit not the most astute of men, Fridiano was deeply in love with his wife, and thought her so beautiful and fascinating that he was jealous of the very flies that flew about her in the air. So to all her excuses he turned a deaf ear; and, with his mind ever bent upon righting matters, he at last got it into his head that his wife would drug his food or drink in order to send him into a sound sleep one night, when she would get up and admit her gallant. How to prevent this was his one thought; for then, as it seemed to him, all would come right.

He accordingly summoned one of the serving-wenches and said to her, "Look you, Giovanna, if you will be faithful to me and keep my counsel,

you shall see what I will do for you in return. I have grave doubts about my wife and the judge, and I fear that one night with some devil's brew of hers she will send me off to sleep, and then will get up and open the door to her lover. So that I want you to prepare my food and draw my wine; and henceforth I will take nothing except from your hand. But see to it that you do not play me false."

Giovanna knew of her mistress's intrigue, and, when she heard this preposterous talk, replied, "Sir, I am in duty bound to do that which you command; and I will fail you nothing in this thing. Myself I do not believe madam to be one of that sort, or I should have noticed something of it ere this. But if she be, this precaution of yours as to food and drink is useless, for the Pisan ladies (so I heard when I was in service with the Lanfranchi family) are most of them well versed in spells and incantations. In fact I was told that if one of them only touch a sleeping person with her hand, and say certain words learnt on Christmas Eve, he will sleep for as many hours as the times she repeats such words."

Hearing this, Fridiano was like one dead, and

it seemed to him that he already slept, spell-bound by the enchantments wrought by his wife. So he cried out, "Alack! what is this that I hear?" "Sir," answered the maid, "I have already told you that I do not think that madam is one of those who work spells; however, the proverb says, Good guard prevents ill chance. If indeed there be aught in this thing, I believe the judge comes in, not by the door but over the garden wall, and, climbing on to where the logs are piled, he thus gets up to your chamber."

Fridiano, poor fool, believed the sly girl's tale, and, after consulting further with her, he determined to keep watch at night-time in the garden. Giovanna told everything to her mistress, who, on hearing of her husband's mad idea, had duplicate door-keys made, and informed her lover of all that had occurred. And if before she had eyed him with favour, she now did far more to show her pleasure at his presence, so that the wretched husband, believing every word that Giovanna had said, grew madly jealous; and, being afraid to sleep beside his wife lest she should bewitch him, he resolved to keep a sharp look-out in the garden. While thus o' nights he numbered the

stars, the lady for safety's sake had the garden-door closed, so that he could not come back without her knowledge. Then, admitting the judge by another entrance, with him she achieved the conjunction of the planets. And to give better colour to the thing, while the judge was with his mistress, one of his serving-men walked round about the outside of the garden, whistling, spitting, and doing things of that sort, while now and again making an attempt to get over the wall, which was rather low. In this way the wretched husband was all night long tortured by the pangs of jealousy, being firmly persuaded that the midnight visitant was the judge, who had come to see his wife. But, as he did not get over the wall, Fridiano feared that the judge knew that he was watching there, in the garden, and this perplexed him greatly. So soon as the gallant quitted his mistress, which was an hour or two before dawn, she unbarred the garden-door; but her jealous husband did not give up watching until well past that time.

Thus the intrigue lasted for a long while, and, Fridiano getting no sleep save occasionally a little in the day-time or in the orchard at night, he

grew thin and haggard, looking like one bewitched. And in truth, who that should spend all his nights moon-gazing would not become thus?

At last the judge, to remove suspicion from the lady and himself, devised with her a magnificent plot, which succeeded in every way just as he had thought it out. Among his serving-folk he had a young Pisan, a big fellow of fine proportions, whose nickname was Ferraguto, and who at the merest hint from the judge would have entered upon any dangerous undertaking. He had certain sergeants of the watch under him, those whose duty it is to patrol the city at night and see that none go abroad armed or without a light. To him the judge said, "Ferraguto, as you know, I love Fridiano's wife, and she loves me, but I cannot visit her, as I desire to do, because of the strict watch which her husband keeps every night. As it would be very easy for me to get in through the garden, he stays there, armed, all night long, so that I cannot approach the wall but he lies in wait on the other side with pike in hand. Yet, armed though he be, I am sure he can do you no hurt, for he is such a weakling that he could hardly spit a soft curd cheese. I want you to tell your fellows

that you have been informed about an outlaw who gets through the garden at night-time, and whom you purpose to arrest. You will first have to get over the wall and drop down into the garden, when doubtless he will attack you; but he can do you little injury. Give instructions to your men to follow you, and I will soon come thither with the rest of the watch, when we will take him, and find a cure, as I think, for his jealousy." "Sir," quoth Ferraguto, "this is but a little matter that you bid me do. Leave all to me, and never trouble about trifles; enough if you tell me the time that you intend to be on the spot yourself."

Accordingly, having fixed the hour, while letting the lady know all, that day my lord the judge passed twice in front of her house, making certain signs to her with his eyes and his hands, which convinced Fridiano, who was on the watch, that the young man intended to visit Beatrice that night. Unable to brook such annoyance any longer, nor to suffer the judge thus insolently to make signals to his wife, Fridiano began to storm and rave at her, exclaiming in the presence of the servants, "Wife, wife, you are carrying matters to such a pitch that, by the Blessed Body of Santa Maria da Montenero,

I will cut your throat, and if this judge of yours comes hanging about here to-night I'll play him such a trick as he will remember for the rest of his life. You want him as your lover, and probably think that I am going to allow this. But wait and see. If you two are Pisans, I am Lucchese. Only let me catch you at one of the windows that overlook the street, and you shall see what I'll do."

The crafty wife, who had all too well summed up her husband and knew the extent of his doughty deeds, at once answered angrily, "What the devil is this, husband, that you say? What thoughtless talk is this of yours? What have you ever seen in me to fill your head with such nonsensical ideas? Though neither is to blame, you make yourself detestable, and me wretched, while there is nothing whatever amiss. You must be stark, staring mad. Don't you know that the judge of this city may go about all the streets at any hour of the day or the night, and in his official capacity enter any house he chooses? Why, you yourself have told me that this same office of judge is one greatly feared and respected. So have a care what you say."

Then Fridiano, beside himself with rage, cried out, "See, see, this Pisan traitress here has come to Lucca to order me about. Would I had been laid up with the quartan ague ere ever I thought of making a woman from Pisa my wife! For all, all of them, men and women, are traitors. May fire from heaven consume you, vile woman that you are!"

Beatrice, who cared little for her husband's wrath, in order to make him more furious, replied, "By the Cross of Christ, you don't lack modesty when you dare to compare yourself with the Pisans! Perhaps you don't know what Pisans have done by sea and land in comparison with Lucchese. Go to, my father was over blind when he chose you as a son-in-law. Cursed be the hour that ever I took you for my husband. You are more suspicious than a mule, and the proverb says truly that the Lucchese are afraid of the very flies in the air. For God's sake mind what you are about, and never dare to lay your hands on me, as that I will never bear, but with these fingers I'll scratch your eyes out. I have done nothing to warrant such threats from you. Beat your dogs if you like, but leave me alone." Thus

they wrangled, and many high words followed, but for one that Fridiano said his wife returned him a score.

When night came, the husband took his supper before the others, and, having armed himself, went to the garden, where he kept on the look-out, intending to play the judge a sorry trick if he should try to climb over the wall.

The judge meanwhile armed his men, telling them that he was going to capture an outlaw of whose whereabouts spies had informed him. Thus he sent on Ferraguto in advance with his sergeants, and himself came after with the rest, waiting about in the neighbourhood of Fridiano's house until the appointed hour. When this struck, Ferraguto, after instructing his men, put the ladder against the wall and was about to climb over it, when he felt himself wounded, but not deeply, in the thigh. So, leaping down, he cried out in a loud voice, "Traitor, you are dead." Ferraguto carried a big partisan, with which he began to belabour Fridiano in fine style, though always with the flat side of the steel. The luckless Fridiano, firmly believing it was Buonaccorsio, thrust blindly at his opponent with his pike, but Ferraguto easily parried his

strokes, and, as the judge had now come up and with the rest had scaled the wall, he cried out, "Come on! come on! we've got the outlaw!"

Having broken open the garden-door, the sergeants had already seized Fridiano, when my lord judge came up and asked where the outlaw was. "Here he is," said the sergeants, never noticing that their prisoner was Fridiano. "Good," replied the judge; "then let us go to the court." Ferraguto, who knew how matters were, now pretended to fall down in a faint, when one of his men called out, "Alack! Ferraguto is dead!" At this the judge turned back, and, seeing blood on the fellow's thigh, said, "The wretch of an outlaw has killed Ferraguto, but he shall pay twofold for this." Then said Fridiano, "I am no outlaw, but Fridiano Z., a citizen of this place." "What?" cried the judge, "you are Fridiano Z.? And what, pray, were you doing armed at this hour? To it, my men! four of you take Ferraguto home and get the doctor; and you others see that Fridiano does not escape. We must search the house, and perhaps we shall find the outlaw there."

So the judge with some of his men entered the house, where, roused by the noise, all the in-

mates had risen, and, calling for lights, he made a careful search everywhere. Finally he called the lady to him, and, harshly threatening her, he said, "Madam, tell me the truth: where is the outlaw who got in here to-night?"

"Sir," she answered, weeping bitterly, "for many days past no one has lodged here in our house. I do not know what you may mean by outlaws."

"Enough," quoth he; "you shall soon know what I mean; and I'll torture you till you do tell the truth. In verity, they were right who informed me some time back that you were a bad woman, who never spoke the truth."

"Sir," she replied, "I am like yourself a Pisan, and an honest woman."

"I am sorry that you are a Pisan," said the judge, "but I must do my duty, be it who it may that falls into my hands." Then he gave orders for Fridiano and his wife to be brought to the court-house with two of their women and a serving man. The lady made loud lamentations, and pretended to resist stoutly, but, unable to do more, she had eventually to yield.

When he saw all that had happened, poor Fridiano said within himself, "Truly, I made a

great mistake to suppose that the judge was in love with my wife: these are not the sort of tricks that lovers play." Then they shut him up with his thoughts in a dungeon that reptiles would have refused as their abode. His servant was put elsewhere, while the wife with her women was lodged in a comfortable chamber, where my lord judge examined her at his leisure. Fridiano was sorely frightened, doubting not but that he would get severe punishment for wounding a sergeant of the court, and for carrying arms at that hour.

On asking the prison warders what had become of his wife, one who knew him said, "I heard messire say that this morning he meant to put her to the rope-torture, in order to make her confess where you hid the outlaw who came to your house yesterday evening. She is bound to have a bad time of it, for this judge is very severe; and then there is Ferraguto, whom you wounded so dangerously, which will give you enough to do." Fridiano was overwhelmed with fear when he heard all this, and he was unspeakably grieved at having thus heedlessly made an enemy of the judge. Being convinced that his wife would really be put to the torture, his heart was like to break, the

judge meanwhile laughing merrily with Beatrice at all that her husband had said about him.

Next morning, when the tale of Fridiano's arrest got about the city, it gave rise to much talk; and if any suspicion had ever existed of the judge's intrigue with Beatrice, this event entirely extinguished it. Many of Fridiano's kinsfolk and friends came to ask the reason for his imprisonment, when the judge told them that, hearing that an outlaw was hiding in Fridiano's house, he had gone thither with his sergeants to seize him, and that Fridiano had not only helped the villain to escape, but, pike in hand, had wounded one of the police-officers. At this they were sorely amazed, and knew not what to answer.

Shortly before dinner the judge sent for Fridiano and asked him if he knew why thus he was imprisoned. The poor wretch answered, "For having wounded an officer of the court." "Well," said the judge, "what were you about at that hour in the garden, wearing casque and corselet, and carrying a pike and a sword?" Unable to find an answer, Fridiano racked his brains in vain for a fitting excuse. "Look you here," said his lordship, "the rope-torture shall be my last resource to make you

confess, for I intend to examine your wife and her servants first, and then I mean to get the truth from you, which willy nilly you will have to tell me. Get you gone and think well over the matter, nor give me reason to treat you with cruelty and put you to the torture."

Then, having sent Fridiano back to prison, the judge questioned the serving-man, who could only say what he had heard Fridiano tell his wife, when he accused her of a love intrigue, and aver that for nights past he had armed himself and gone out into the garden. At this confession, the judge caused his secretary to write down especially the insulting words which Fridiano had spoken of himself, including his threat to kill him. Then Beatrice was brought, who confirmed her servant's statements, adding, moreover, that she had often heard her husband say that he had determined to kill the judge, while her two maids gave evidence as to the last wrangle between Fridiano and his wife, all which statements were reduced to writing. Then, after dinner, the judge went with Beatrice and two trusty servants to the torture-chamber, first pulling Fridiano, manacled, into a room adjoining this, where he could easily

hear all that was said. Determined to cure him of his jealousy, and destroy the least suspicion which Fridiano might have of him, the judge said to Beatrice in a loud voice, "Come, come, no more words about it! bind this woman to the rope, and haul her up. I'll soon make her confess." Whereupon Beatrice (who knew her part) flung herself, screaming, upon the ground, and begged for mercy. "Sir," she cried, "I know nothing else but what I have already told you; you wrong me, indeed you do! Oh, mercy, mercy me! For God's sake, don't bind me so tightly!"

The judge pretended not to hear her cries, and said, "Now then, no more delay; swing her up!" The men then made a noise with the rope, and she, withdrawing somewhat, shrieked aloud for mercy, while the judge harshly scolded her, saying, "Beatrice, tell me truly; do you know anything of the murder which your husband had resolved to commit? What do you say? Speak." Then, crying and sobbing, she uttered inarticulate sounds, as do those that are being cruelly tortured. Soon after, the judge called out: "'Sblood! but I will make you confess the truth. You won't speak, eh? Ah! but you shall, though. I'll drive the

obstinacy out of you, see if I don't, Pisan or no Pisan. Haul her right up, men, and then let her go with a good jerk. I am determined that this stubborn wench shall either speak the truth or else leave her two arms hanging to the rope. Up with her!" Now a log of wood had been tied to the rope, which made it seem as if some one were being hauled up and down, while Madam Beatrice gave out dreadful shrieks such as do the tortured.

The wretched Fridiano recognised his wife's voice as she shrieked and begged for mercy, and, being sure that it was really his dear Beatrice, he shouted like a madman. "Oh, mercy, mercy, my lord judge! for God's sake don't torture my wife any more, as she, poor thing, is no whit to blame. Your labour is vain, since she cannot tell you what she does not know. Oh, my dearest wife, my best and truest wife, why am I not tortured instead of you?" Hearing this, and seeing that matters were going as he had planned, the judge pretended not to know that Fridiano had been transferred to that chamber, and turning to his men he asked angrily, "Who put Fridiano in that room?" "Sir," replied one, "you

yourself committed him to the *Barigello*."* "I committed him?" cried the judge. "They did not understand me. Why, I told them to bring him here, after this woman had been tortured, not before, as it is not fitting that he should hear what others confess when under torture. Now, take the woman back to prison and bring me the key of this room, as I intend to examine Fridiano."

Laughing at the trick that they were playing her husband, Beatrice went back to her chamber, where she stayed with her women, and, when they had got the key, Fridiano was brought before the judge, who said, "If you overheard what your wife said, I cannot tell. She was inclined to be obstinate, but this rope dragged some part of the truth from her; and I hope we shall get all of it when I have slung her up again. Your servants had more sense, and confessed all they knew, without obliging me to harm them. Now, it's your turn, so if you will tell the truth, speak out, or else this" (showing him the rope) "will help you to do so, whether you want to or not. I wish to know who the outlaw was that you had in your garden, and whom you allowed

* Head of the officers of police.

to escape when my sergeants were about to arrest him, while you wounded one of my men into the bargain. At such a time and place I'll be bound you were not going about armed merely to crack chestnuts. You will do well to speak the truth."

Then Fridiano, terror-struck, replied, "Sir, I will tell you the whole truth; but for God's sake do not torture me! The fact is, I believed you to be in love with my wife, and certain signs, as I thought, led me to this conclusion. Moreover, I often quarrelled with her about this matter, using harsh threats towards her, and vowing that I would kill both her and you, should I find you in my house. As I suspected that you came in by the garden, I stayed there several nights, to watch. When your men arrived, I took the fellow who climbed over the wall for yourself, and, thinking to kill you, I fell upon him and wounded him, for it seemed to me lawful to defend myself in my own house and prevent any one from coming in against my will. I have nothing more to say, except that I have no truck with outlaws, nor do I know that any such people have ever entered my house."

The judge caused all this to be written down

by the notary, and said to him, "What think you to all this, Messer Paolino?" "In truth, my lord," replied the notary, "he merits capital punishment, for he heard the sergeants call out, 'Have at the outlaw!' and yet he assaulted Ferraguto, an officer of justice. Nay, he even admits that he meant to wound your own person; and that is *crimen læsæ majestatis*. Unless you exercise your clemency, I fear that he must lose his head, first for having hindered them from taking the outlaw, and secondly for having wounded your representative; as both these things be capital offences according to the laws of this magnificent city. Then, again, he confessed that he went about armed last night, with the deliberate intention of killing you; that he lay in wait for you; and that, in attacking Ferraguto, he thought to attack you. Moreover, in these matters of homicide the lawyers say that the will counts for as much as the deed."

Fridiano, nearly dead with fright, was then taken back to prison, where he remained in dire distress, being full of fear at the thought of losing his own life, and anxious about his wife, whom he believed to be maimed by the dreadful tortures she had undergone.

A week passed, and then the judge, to put an end to the joke, caused Fridiano to be brought before him one evening, and said, in the presence of a Pisan notary (aware of the hoax, and whom Messer Malletti had sent to Lucca on his behalf), "I do not know what harm I have ever done you, Fridiano, since I came to this magnificent city, that you should have sought with such bitterness to bring about my death. Say, now, what hurt did you ever get at my hands that you should lie in wait for so many nights, armed, to kill me? May I not in the discharge of my official duties go about the city with perfect freedom at all hours of the day or the night? I have considered your case, and I purpose to administer such punishment as the municipal statutes require. Therefore to-morrow I will have you put to the torture by rope, so that the depositions may be taken according to law; and after this I will do with you as we do with assassins."

Here the terrified prisoner flung himself, weeping, at the judge's feet, and said, "My lord, if you will but hear me patiently, I am certain that on hearing the truth you will not think me so guilty, while you will be assured of my dear wife's

innocence, who in this matter is wholly free from blame, and, poor heart! deserves to be set at liberty." Then the judge bade Fridiano rise, and said, "I will listen patiently to anything that you may have to relate."

So Fridiano, rising, spoke as follows: "Sir, I have already told you that I suspected you of making love to my wife, for, ever since your entry into Lucca this last January, you always used to pass along in front of my house. As I knew that I had a very beautiful wife (a possession that brings with it not so much pleasure at night as vexation by day), I became dreadfully suspicious, for you were a comely young man, and a Pisan. Moreover, my suspicions increased when I noted certain things in you, as in her, which seemed to show that your love-intrigue had had its beginning elsewhere. Now, I know that I was mistaken; yet when my wife said that you were paying court to a widow lady, our neighbour, I would not believe her, and thus things happened as I told you before. Yet it seems to me that my case deserves compassion, as in my own house I may carry arms, if I like. Again, if you wanted to enter my garden, you could have sent me word,

instead of scaling the wall unawares. As I was in so suspicious a mood, what else could I do? What would you yourself have done in my place? With regard to my wife, as you have now tortured her thus cruelly, rest assured that you have ill-treated her without cause, as she is in no way to blame." Then the Pisan notary said, "Fridiano, your father-in-law sent me here to see if I could obtain your freedom and that of your wife with as little shame and hurt as is possible. I have seen the depositions, and the case is as bad as bad can be; nevertheless I will speak with my lord judge, and do the best I can." Begging him to lose no time in the matter, Fridiano thanked the notary, and was then led back to prison.

Then the judge conferred with Beatrice and the notary as to the best way to make an end of the matter; and they agreed that the notary should visit Fridiano in prison and get him to ask for permission to speak with his wife. This the notary did, and in due course he brought the lady to Fridiano's cell, with her eyes full of tears and her cheeks all ashen-white with sulphur fumes, so that she seemed as one come back from the grave. Seeing her thus pale and sad, the husband em-

braced her, weeping, and asked her pardon a thousand times for having ever suspected her thus, promising that, if he came out of prison, she should be absolute mistress of the house, as he knew that she was a good and virtuous woman. Then she pretended that she was crippled and could not move hand or foot, at which he began to moan, saying, "My darling wife, my sweetheart, and my only solace, forgive, do forgive me! I know that it is I who have caused you all this hurt. Oh, my dearest one, what is it? How do you feel?" She still kept on shamming,* and in a faint voice declared that she was all bruised, and so weak that she could scarcely speak. Then the notary said, "Lose no time, Madam Beatrice, now that you are free to hold converse with your husband. It took me a good while before I could persuade the judge to grant you this interview. I will briefly give you my opinion of the case. What is past cannot be undone; even God Himself, though He might have prevented its occurrence, cannot do away with the event, now that it has happened. So, leaving the past, let us look to the future. I have read the depositions; and

* Textually, "played the dead cat."

yours, Beatrice, as well as those of the servants, do much to aggravate matters. Then there is your confession, Fridiano, which, if Ferraguto dies, will cost you your head. And, if he do not die (which God grant), your hand will be chopped off, your eye put out, and you will be banished for three years. Nevertheless, I hope that he may recover, so we must try and find a means of saving you from mutilation; and this could be done by your paying a fine of one thousand gold florins."

When Fridiano heard this, he said, "The thing goes less ill than I at first imagined, for I felt certain that, having made such a confession with my own lips, it would have gone much harder with me. All the same, it is a sore thing for one like me to have to pay a thousand florins. I am not a merchant, nor do I follow any trade; and my income barely suffices to keep my house going from year to year. But it seems to me that you, Mr. Notary, who made our marriage-settlement, could draw up a deed dated three or four days after this document. I will make over to you, my wife, all my property *inter vivos* in writing, thus rendering myself unable to pay the fine; and when I get out of prison, everything can be settled."

Beatrice then begged the notary to do her this favour, and after a while he consented, agreeing moreover to use his influence with the judge to procure a mitigation of the sentence.

After this, the lady and the notary went back to Buonaccorsio, who, on hearing of Fridiano's desire to make over all his property to his wife, said to her, "Madam, for you this is a stroke of luck, as in future you will be mistress of everything; and though your husband must live with you, he will never dare to bully you again. God be praised, things are going well. We shall have cured our good friend Fridiano of his excessive jealousy, while preventing any further disagreeable domestic scenes. Ferraguto is well again, for his hurt was not in a dangerous part, so that I think that it is now time we give Fridiano his liberty. But first of all, do you go back home betimes with your servants to-morrow, and after dinner I will pass sentence as follows, viz., that Fridiano Z., for having wounded a police officer and prevented the arrest of an outlaw, be obliged to pay the expenses for medicine and nursing incurred by the said police officer, and be moreover bound to serve as inspector of contrabands for the period of one year

without pay. And if such sentence seem a light one, I would say that the entreaties of Signor Pietro Gambacorta and of my many kinsmen and friends led me to deal less severely with the case than I should otherwise have done. The penalty of serving as contraband inspector is for having resisted the officers of the court; all the rest (my own private injuries) I freely forgive him, in consideration of the many letters of recommendation which I have had from relatives and friends."

This being done, the good judge went, as was his wont, to spend the evening with his mistress, when they both waxed merry over the hoax played upon poor Fridiano, while Beatrice declared that the booby had got off all too cheap.

And to show that he had planned matters with a view to their being together in the future, the judge said, "See, now, sweetheart mine [here he kissed her two hundred times], I have sentenced Fridiano to this year of contraband work because he will have to be all day in the saddle, and away in the country. When I choose, I shall keep him there for four or five days, and then we can be together at our pleasure, undisturbed. Or if he is in town, I shall often give orders for him to

remain four or five hours in one street with the watch, not allowing him to move without my permission. In this way I can come and see you for an hour or two, so that all the while I am judge we can have the best of times together. What say you, O heart of my heart? Is not our matter well arranged like this?" Beatrice, whose love for him was as great as his for her, replied by a thousand tender kisses, and said, "Sweet my love, you have indeed managed it exceedingly well, and right sure am I that you love me with all your heart, while I love you more than life itself." Thus with caresses and sweet talk the hours passed; and when morning came, Beatrice, accompanied by her servants, went home.

Fridiano meanwhile was again visited by the notary, who said to him, "You may thank God, Fridiano, that you happen to have a Pisan wife, as, but for her, I cannot see how you could have escaped losing a hand and an eye. But the letters which her father had written have served you in such stead, that this day you are to be set free and may go home when it likes you. You will be obliged to pay for Ferraguto's medicine and

his doctor's fee, a mere trifle; the other part of the penalty being that you must serve as unsalaried officer of contrabands for the term of one year. The appointment is a good one, and of profit to yourself, while you will often be able to help some of your friends. I say no more, except that for your father-in-law's sake I have spared no pains in this matter.

"The judge was very wroth with you, and indeed he seems to have had good cause for this, since you sought to take his life who had done you no harm. To him your wife counts no more than as a thing that he has never even seen, for his affections, as I happen to know, are centred elsewhere. You should thank him greatly, and be under a life-long obligation to him, for, had he chosen to harm you, as he might have done, woe were unto you and yours!"

At this good news Fridiano felt as if brought back from death to life, and countless were the thanks which he gave to the notary. After dinner, at the usual hour that the judge sat on the bench, when he had disposed of other cases, my lord gave final sentence in the matter of Fridiano Z. In order to lay the prisoner under

deeper obligation to him, he would not let him pay a farthing for prison-fees or other expenses, nor even the trifling sum for Ferraguto's medicine, so that our good friend Fridiano on leaving prison fell on his knees before the judge and gave him a thousand thanks, assuring him that he and all his worldly possessions were henceforth at his lordship's service. To this the judge made a fitting answer, hinting that Fridiano was under the deepest obligation to his father-in-law, whose interception and the favour of Signor Gambacorta had really procured him his freedom. He also bade him get ready, as soon as possible, to undertake the post assigned to him, which he was to fill with all diligence.

Fridiano then went home, and could not find words enough in praise of the judge, remarking among other things, "Wife, dearest, I should wish my lord judge to come here to our house whenever he likes without any sort of ceremony, as he is indeed a most worthy man, and we are all deeply indebted to him, for, had he liked, he could have done us great harm." His wife confirmed all this, and, profiting by her husband's good humour, she desired the notary at once to

draw up the deed of gift, which he was not slow to do, with all such clauses as the judge thought expedient to put in.

In this way things went on so smoothly that all the while that Messer Buonaccorsio held the post of judge he was able to meet his mistress whenever he liked. So pleasant indeed was this intimacy to him that, when the two years were over, he managed to obtain the office of deputy-provost and afterwards that of provost, winning golden opinions from all, but most from Fridiano, who not only would credit no ill of his lordship, but, even had he seen him actually embracing Beatrice, would never have believed his own eyes.

SIMONE TURCHI, being at enmity with Geronimo Deodati of Lucca, makes his peace with him; but afterwards in unheard-of fashion murders him; and is himself burnt alive at Antwerp.

I WOULD here tell you the pitiful story of a murder committed with the utmost barbarity conceivable. It happened in Flanders, the persons concerned being two merchants of the pleasant city of Lucca, who lived in Antwerp, a city famed for its wealth and gaiety—the market, so to speak, for all the Christians of Europe and elsewhere to meet. Life there is far freer and more intimate than in many other places. Among other familiar customs in Antwerp I would mention this, viz., that marriageable damsels before they grow up usually have young lovers about them, who call themselves their servants. That maiden is most thought of who has most "servants"; and the young fellows may visit the girls all day un-

hindered, at their houses, albeit the parents are there, paying court and chatting to them either in the morning or the evening. They often invite them also to dinner and supper, and, as they say, to banquetings in divers gardens, where the maidens, all unwatched, may walk about with their lovers at will, and where they spend whole days in eating and drinking, singing and dancing, in company with others that the lover may have invited to share their merriment. When evening comes the lover conducts the lady home and gives her back to her mother, who affectionately thanks the youth for the favour and honour shown to her daughter. Then, after respectfully kissing the maiden and her mother, he straightway goes off about his business. Kissing is permitted there to every one at any time and in any place. Such is the life that marriageable girls are wont to lead; but, being once wed, they are no longer allowed to have lovers—at least, openly. What the married women do, though, I have never been over-curious to find out, for these are things which they keep secret.

Some fourteen or fifteen years ago, one of the first ladies of Antwerp was Madam Maria Verné,

highly esteemed for her wealth no less than for her many noble qualities. This esteem, though now of mature age and still unmarried, she has never lost. At the time of which I speak, her beauty and agreeable manners caused her to have more gallants and devoted admirers than any other gentlewoman in Antwerp, for Flemish, Germans, French, English, Italians, and Spaniards, as well as youths of every nation that were brought to Antwerp on business, all called themselves her faithful servants, and daily paid court to her. In fact, as the continued place of resort for her admirers, all of whom came there to pay homage, her house seemed like the residence of some ruler or office-holder of high rank. One of her lovers was Filiberto, Prince of Orange, general of the Imperial forces in Italy, who died during the siege of Florence. For a while, indeed, it was generally thought that he would make her his wife.

At this time Simone Turchi lived in Antwerp, where he was the agent of the firm of Buonvisi, the famous merchants of Lucca. About fourteen years ago he made the acquaintance of Madam Maria Verné, paying such assiduous court to her

that, leaving aside all other business, he never quitted her society, while the lady for her part appeared very fond of him. In one of her reception-rooms she was wont to place the portraits taken from life of all her gallants, and each one at the commencement of his courtship sent her his picture painted by the hand of some distinguished painter. As each new portrait came, she hung it beside the others in her hall, and in her collection she had over forty such pictures.

Four years after the arrival of Simone Turchi in Antwerp, Geronimo Deodati, another merchant from Lucca, came thither, and having a goodly sum of money he settled there for the purpose of trading. In a few days he joined the band of Madam Verné's admirers, and at her house became intimate with Turchi, who, as I have said, was none too zealous for the business interests of the Buonvisi. As Simone wanted money, he borrowed from Deodati, who repeatedly lent him sums amounting to nearly three thousand scudi.

When the Buonvisi heard how badly Turchi was managing their affairs, they cancelled his appointment, no longer allowing him to act on their behalf. Being unable to trade on his own

account, Turchi returned to Lucca, to enter the service of some merchant who did business with Antwerp. It so chanced that at this time Deodati also came back to Lucca, to settle accounts with his brothers, and from his papers they found that Simone Turchi owed nearly three thousand scudi. Accordingly the brothers pressed Deodati to pay them this sum, without further loss of time. He went to see Turchi concerning this, and told him he could not settle accounts with his brothers until Simone paid him back the moneys lent to him when in Antwerp, as stated in the note of hand which he held. Turchi made what excuses he could, seeking to avoid payment by postponing it from day to day. Meantime the brothers harassed Geronimo, bidding him give no heed to Turchi's plausible tales; and thus the matter went on until it came before the court, when the bills were produced, and Simone was arrested by the sergeants and put in prison, whence he could not come out until he had paid his debt.

To Turchi this seemed a most grievous injury; and in his heart there sprang up a fierce, implacable hatred towards Geronimo, albeit of this he gave no outward sign. But he never ceased to

plot and plan some way or means by which, to Deodati's infinite hurt, he might have his revenge. After a time they both returned to Antwerp, though not in company; and, as this quarrel had now begun between them, the old intimacy ceased, though they both courted Madam Verné as assiduously as ever.

One day when many people were present, the table turned upon Simone and his affairs, when Geronimo sneeringly remarked that he failed to see what Turchi could do in Antwerp, unless it were to turn broker (we Italians call it *sensale*), for he could do no business on his own account, having neither money nor credit. This speech, acting like oil flung upon flaming coals, greatly served to increase Turchi's hatred for Geronimo, which now became deeper and more bitter, although he kept it hidden. A Grecian sage once said that if one could look into the heart of man and note the whirl of fancies in his mind when wrathful and wholly bent upon cruel revenge, it would seem just as if one saw a jar brimful of water, which turbulently boils and seethes upon the flames of a fierce fire. In a like way was the mind of Turchi troubled, and he imagined first

one thing, then another in his anger, all his thoughts being set upon the death and ruin of Deodati. Yet, like his namesake, he masked his mad and measureless desire to do evil, saying merely that Geronimo was mistaken, as he was very well able to do business on his own account.

Meanwhile, the two merchants with many others persevered in their attentions to the fair Madam Verné, and by degrees began to be reconciled, so that at last they seemed to have become good friends. Openly, at any rate, the lady showed greater preference for Turchi than for the others, perhaps because he pleased her, or because, when he had it, he spent large sums upon her. In truth he used to spend money recklessly — far more recklessly than befitted a person of his degree.

Some thought that Simone enjoyed her favours, for people are always more ready to believe bad than good, though what I myself heard about this in Antwerp was the mere gossip of suspicious, envious folk.

However that might have been, Turchi managed to talk the lady over and persuade her to sell a part of her property and put the money

in a bank, pointing out what a great profit she would derive from this. She let herself be thus counselled, and after selling her property for four or five thousand scudi, she placed the whole sum in Turchi's hands. When he got this good sum of money, Simone went into partnership with Vincenzo Castrucci of Lucca, and started business, but, the better to pay court to Madam Verné, he left the care of the bank to Giuseppe Turchi, his nephew. The partnership lasted about three years, and upon the death of Castrucci it was dissolved. As seemingly at that time Simone was good friends with Deodati, again he asked him, not long after, to lend him three thousand crowns for Spain, which Geronimo, in his good-natured, happy-go-lucky way, was very willing to do, being duly repaid at the time fixed. In this way Turchi joined partnership with the Gigli of Lucca, who had a bank at Antwerp.

Geronimo was daily expecting his wife to arrive from Lucca, the daughter of Gian Bernadini, a noble of that city. But still he went to visit Madam Verné every day, who always gave him hearty welcome, treating him as a friend, not as a suitor, now that she knew that

he had taken a wife. She had no small suspicion that Turchi's affairs were going far from well, as she noticed that he neglected his business; and she had great fears for the money with which she had entrusted him for trading purposes. As from several Lucchese merchants and others she received warnings about this, for several days she remained uncertain whether to speak to Simone on the subject or not.

At length she resolved to mention the matter to Deodati, seek his advice, and ask him to tell her what, if in her position, he would do. So, one day, in the course of a long private talk with him, she explained all, when Geronimo thus answered, "Lady mine, since you do me the favour of asking my opinion as regards this urgent matter of yours, methinks I should be committing a grievous error if, as your ever loyal and faithful servant, I did not truly tell you what I believe your interests require, and what, in your stead, I myself should do. You tell me that many of my countrymen and others have advised you to make sure of the money entrusted to Turchi. I am certainly of the same opinion, and the sooner you do this the better. There-

fore I advise you to do one of two things; either let the money be paid back to you, or get an acknowledgment of the whole debt plus the interest thereon from the Gigli, who as merchants are loyal, honourable men."

This wise counsel greatly pleased Madam Verné, and she decided to act upon it, so when there was an opportunity she told Simone of her wish to recover the money, saying that she had been advised to do so by several merchants, and chiefly by those of Lucca. As some allege, she mentioned Deodati's name among others. In truth, it is a great mistake ever to tell a woman anything that should be kept secret, for as a matter of fact few of them can hold their tongue where silence does not seem to them advantageous. This is why Cato the Censor used to say that nothing vexed him more than to have told a woman of something which ought to have been kept a secret. We know that women as a rule are ambitious, and are convinced that they know a great deal more than they really do, being all desirous to be thought great rulers. Many a time they assert that if they but held the reins they could govern a state far better than any man. Nor am I dis-

inclined to think that they speak truth, when one sees so many incapable, witless men, who have the conduct of important matters — fellows who are not worth the very water wherewith they wash their hands. However, I am not minded to blame either men or women, for my mother was a woman, and I was born a man. Suffice it now to say, that Geronimo did far from wisely to speak ill of Turchi to Madam Verné, as, unless he was careless, unbusiness-like, and untrustworthy, there was no cause for advising Madam Verné to take the money out of his hands. The lady, on the other hand, did worse still to tell Turchi who her adviser had been. She might very well have said that certain merchants, men of standing, had advised her to secure her capital, without mentioning any names.

I wished to tell you all this to show that Turchi, who considered himself wronged by being imprisoned at Lucca, and also by being referred to as a broker by Geronimo, had inwardly determined to have his revenge, though apparently they were reconciled. The loan of the three thousand scudi for Spain had in a way sweetened the bitterness of the old hatred; in fact, as Simone

himself confessed when about to be burned, it was well-nigh extinct. This last insult, however, which he considered most outrageous, served to rekindle the half-quenched flames of the old enmity, so that Turchi resolved to sweep Geronimo from his sight, no matter what should befall. He was the more determined to do this because some days before, when out at night, he had received an ugly blow in the face from an enemy of his; and he believed Geronimo to have wounded him thus. But he was greatly mistaken, as the sequel of events will show.

You must know that Simone was a man of very evil disposition and wicked habits, with the most biting, venomous tongue conceivable. In the art of sowing discord between friends he was unrivalled, laying his traps so cunningly that falsehoods wore the guise of truth. To sum up, he was a very sink of all that is malignant and vicious, and whereas each of us should grieve at the misfortune of our fellow-man, while rejoicing at his welfare, Simone did exactly the reverse. He was wont to praise the barbarous cruelties of certain tyrants, and sought to learn how he himself might imitate these; while his favourite

saying used to be, that of all sweet things in the world revenge was the sweetest.

As thus this wicked notion of revenge had got into his head, he determined to slay Geronimo, and moreover to do him to death in such a way that men hereafter should call the manner of his taking-off to mind. Above all, it should be a revenge that could not bring him hurt at the hands of justice, although every one would be morally certain that the deed was his. At first he thought of poison, but then abandoned this idea, as it seemed to him impossible to procure any without detection. So he determined that steel should do the work. Being gouty and weak of arm and hand, he knew that he was not strong enough to commit the murder himself, but that he must needs have an accomplice. As already stated, he had left the care of the bank to his nephew, Giuseppe, in whom he did not wish to confide. So he turned to one of his servants, a Romagnole named Giulio, and told him that he desired to kill Deodati, when the perfidious villain of a servant, being in disposition like his master, declared himself ready to do all.

Knowing nothing of his evil nature, the Gigli

had recently given him the entire management of the bank, vesting him by letters with the power of attorney. In this capacity, therefore, Simone caused a document to be drawn up by a public notary, in which the Gigli were made to avow their indebtedness to Madam Verné for the sum which she had lent Turchi; and, on getting this acknowledgment, she was satisfied.

Now, while his desire to kill Geronimo grew daily stronger, it so happened that once at the house of Madam Verné's cousin he noticed a curious sort of chair. When any one sat down upon it the bottom at once fell in, while from the sides, on which one rests the arms, two great bars of iron shot forth out of the wood, which pinned the thighs of the sitter in such a way that he remained locked in, unable to move or get out of the chair, till with a special key he could open it. This chair Turchi borrowed, and caused it to be brought to a summer-house in a garden of his where Madam Verné and others often took meals with him, intending to make it serve his purpose when the proper time came.

Accordingly, one day when talking to Deodati, he said that in his garden he had the most

beautiful cauliflowers that had ever been seen in all Antwerp. Deodati asked if he could have some of them to plant in his grounds, when Turchi replied that he could come and see them whenever he wished, and choose those which he liked best. However, Deodati forgot to go there, being possibly prevented by various business matters, so one day, rather early in the morning, Turchi said to him, "Geronimo, a merchant from Lyons has come here, who for the present does not wish to be known in Antwerp, so he is keeping in seclusion in my summer-house. He asked me to bring you thither, as he desires to speak to you about matters of the utmost importance."

Believing this, Geronimo promised to come, and as soon as he had dined he went there alone. Not finding the merchant he asked where he was, and Turchi said that he had gone out on some business of his, but would soon return. They both walked up and down in the hall on the ground floor where the treacherous chair had been set. Just then the base Romagnole came in to say that the merchant had arrived, and as Geronimo approached the chair the wretch lifted him up bodily and thrust him therein. Deodati thought

this was a joke, but no sooner had he sat down than he felt himself locked into the chair, a prisoner, and for very amazement he could not utter a word. Then the villain of a servant went out, bolting the door after him.

As Deodati sat there helpless, like one in a dream, the traitorous Simone, seizing a Pistoian dagger which he had laid ready, came up to him and said, "Geronimo, I would have you remember the grievous injury which here and in Lucca you did me. But now we are not in Lucca, where you might put me in prison; but I have got you in my power, and unless you give me a paper, written and signed by you, of the sort that I have here drawn up, I will stab the life out of you with this dagger."

The wretched Deodati read the paper, by which he was made to acknowledge himself indebted to Turchi for several thousand scudi, and he consented to copy it. This he accordingly did there and then, affixing his signature and dating it some months back. Many aver that the writing in question was of another tenor, and that in it Geronimo confessed to having falsely and maliciously prosecuted Turchi in Lucca, stating, more-

over, that it was he who one night had slashed him across the face, so that such confession might seem to give Simone just cause to murder him. Be that as it may, when Turchi had got the paper he placed it in his bosom, and, drawing the dagger, struck at Geronimo's face with it; but lacking force wherewith to deal the blow, he only wounded him slightly on the cheek. Deodati, shrieking piteously, cried out, "For God's sake, have mercy, have mercy! Don't kill me!" Feeling pity for the wretched man, or else wanting strength to do the deed, Simone threw down the dagger and went out. He found Giulio the servant waiting there, to whom he said, "I wounded him, but I have not got the heart to kill him. What shall we do?" "Do?" cried the dastardly Giulio. "Why, master, as we have opened the ball, we must needs dance. We must kill him; or else, if things are left like this, he will get us our death." "Go you, then," answered Turchi, "and do for him." So Giulio, who must have had a hand in a hundred murders besides this (for in his accursed Romagna they kill people in churches and even little babes in their cradles), went back to the hall, picked up the dagger, and

approached the luckless Deodati, who, seeing him coming at him, blade in hand, shrieked out, "O Giulio! for the love of God do not kill me, for I have never done you any injury. Set me free, and I will sign a paper giving you three thousand ducats, and much more if you like, while I promise on my honour never to harm you either by word or act." He was about to say more, but the fiendish servant dealt him a deadly blow on the head, following this up by several stabs in the chest, so that the wretched Geronimo there and then expired.

When this horrible murder was done, Simone returned, and, unlocking the chair, with Giulio's help lifted out the corpse. It being too heavy for them to carry, they dragged it along the ground and buried it in a remote corner of the cellar. Then they went about their business, looking as light-hearted and happy as if they had done a laudable and holy deed.

His kinsfolk waited vainly that evening for Geronimo to return to supper and to bed. As all next day he did not come, his mysterious disappearance caused a great stir and talk throughout Antwerp. The two chief officers of justice,

those, I mean, of the Civil and Criminal Departments, being cousins of Madam Verné's, were both on terms of intimacy with Turchi, and he often enjoyed their hospitality. So, two days after the murder, he went to the President of the Civil Department and took supper with him, in order to find out what they were saying about Deodati's disappearance.

When discussing the matter and observing how very strange it was that no trace could be found of Geronimo, Turchi remarked to his host, "My lord, I hope you will make every effort to track him," when the officer replied, "To-day in council we have decided to search all the houses and gardens situated in such and such a district, my garden being among these, and carefully to look in every place that he used to frequent." Simone said that this was an excellent plan, and one hour seemed to him as a thousand years before he could get away home.

Supper being over, he made excuses for leaving the company, and on reaching home he said to the Romagnole, "Giulio, we shall need the very eyes of Argus, and must do such work to-night as shall save us from being caught un-

awares to-morrow." Then he told him of what the officers of justice had decided in council, adding, "You know that the chair is still covered with blood, so now this very minute you must go down and wash it thoroughly, so that not the slightest blood-stain is left upon it. On the wall, too, against which the chair leant, there are splashes of blood, when it spirted, so you must also wash the wall, and wipe up any stains on the flooring made by the blood that dripped from the body as we dragged it along to the cellar. Do not let the faintest trace of blood be seen, for this proposed searching of gardens and houses makes me fear that they suspect something, or else the magistrate fancies that there has been foul play. So, do all this that I tell you, and then you must dig up the corpse, and carry it on your shoulders to the well where the three roads meet, and you must throw it in there. The night will be dark, and at such an hour no one is likely to pass that way. Thus we shall make matters safe for ourselves."

Giulio replied that he would do everything most carefully, but to carry the corpse his nerve failed him; moreover, it was so heavy that, as

Turchi would remember, they were both of them hardly able to drag it along and bury it. "Get about it," said Simone, "finish the other things first, and I will send that Piedmontese fellow to you, with orders to do exactly what you tell him, but when the corpse is in the well try if by treachery you cannot pitch the lout in after it. The well is a very deep one, and directly he fell into it he would be suffocated. If by chance you should be unable to do this, you know that he never carries a weapon of any sort, and has no more pluck than a rabbit. Put this Pistoian dagger in your belt, stab him with it, and leave him lying there, in the roadway. Who is there that would ever suppose that we had killed him?"

See, now, what an arch-villain this Turchi was, for, not content with having done poor Deodati to death in the most cruel manner, he now wished to kill his Piedmontese servant, who in no way had ever harmed him. Giulio forthwith set about cleaning up the whole house as bidden; and when the time seemed opportune, Simone sent the Piedmontese down into the garden to Giulio, with orders to do whatever he was told.

On knocking at the door of the pavilion and saying who it was, the servant was admitted by Giulio, who had a light in his hand, and, leading the way, he told the Piedmontese to follow him. The chair had been cleansed, and all the blood-stains washed out, and he had by this time well-nigh disinterred the corpse. On reaching the cellar, Giulio put the light on a bench and said, "Piedmontese, help me to lift this body out of the hole, here." "Woe's me!" cried the other, "what dead man is this?" "Never you mind," rejoined Giulio, "help me, and don't say a word. I want to carry the body to the well at the cross roads and throw it in." The Piedmontese, a good-hearted, timid fellow, obeyed, for he knew what a murderous blackguard Giulio was. So together they hauled the body up out of the pit, and as soon as the Piedmontese saw the face and clothes he knew that the corpse was that of poor Deodati. This greatly amazed him, though he dared say nothing. They took the corpse, one by the heels and the other by the head, and went out of the garden. No sooner were they outside the door than, letting the body fall, the Piedmontese ran away as fast as ever his heels would carry him,

so that Giulio, being taken aback, could not start at once in pursuit, thus the other had the advantage of him. For a good while Giulio gave chase, but in the darkness of the night he lost sight of the fugitive, and when he no longer heard his footfall he returned to the garden door and tried all he could to carry the corpse as far as the well. But this was impossible. So he dragged the body into the house, which was only about four yards from the gate, and, shutting this, he went in great chagrin and dismay to tell Simone what had happened.

Turchi, at the news, was in despair, knowing not what to do, as he plainly foresaw his ruin; and Giulio thereupon said to him, "I don't know where that cowardly Piedmontese is gone, but as he saw me dig up Geronimo's body, which doubtless he recognised, my life is now in danger. It seems to me that I ought to get away, for if he denounces me, and I have fled, while you stay here, it will clearly show that it is not you but I who am guilty of Geronimo's death." Such advice seemed to Simone sound; and he gave Giulio all the money he had in his purse, besides two gold chains which happened to be in his pocket,

and which weighed about thirty-three scudi apiece. Moreover, he promised always to furnish him with money wherever he went. So, as soon as the gates were opened, Giulio left the city and set out towards Aix.

The Piedmontese wandered about, here and there, all night long, thinking what he should do, while Simone his master, tortured by a thousand fears, was unable to sleep a wink. More than once he resolved to escape as soon as daylight came, but then he reflected that this might cause grave suspicion to fall on him concerning the crime; and, as Giulio had gone, he deemed it safer to stay. At daybreak the Piedmontese went to Geronimo's kinsfolk and told them what had occurred; Simone, in some way or another, at once got to know of this, when he went straight to the house of the chief criminal officer and stated how he had heard that Giulio, his servant, had killed Deodati and had fled. Upon getting this information, the officer went to consult an uncle of his who had great legal experience, and who had given up to him the post of criminal officer. The old man asked if he had detained Turchi, and, on being answered in the negative,

he sharply censured the officer, and bade him arrest Simone at once.

Geronimo's relations meanwhile hearing of the awful tragedy, had taken counsel with some of his friends and fellow-countrymen as to how they should act. In this way news of the atrocious murder soon got about Antwerp. The criminal officer forthwith summoned Turchi, who on arriving was ordered to remain in custody, to which he consented, though the officer remarked that his countenance changed visibly, which increased his suspicions. In his wallet Simone had the paper written and signed by Deodati, and going up to the fire which burned in the chimney he threw it in. The officer, seeing this, asked him what he was burning, when Turchi replied that it was merely a worthless scrap of paper. Geronimo's friends now arrived, bringing with them the Piedmontese, who, being privately examined by the magistrate, told everything exactly as it had happened. The officer bade the dead man's kinsfolk fear nothing, but keep a good heart, as all justice meet for so monstrous a crime should most assuredly be done. Then, dismissing them, he detained the Piedmontese

and confronted him with Turchi, who could not deny that he had ordered the servant to go down into the garden pavilion and obey Giulio's orders, but this was because Giulio had said that, without help, he could not move certain beds and set them in order. Yet he faltered so much when affirming this that it greatly heightened the officer's suspicions, and he ordered Turchi to be kept in prison, while the Piedmontese was to remain at the magistrate's house. They fetched Deodati's corpse, and Simone was confronted with it, in order to satisfy many folk who declared that if Turchi was the murderer the wounds would bleed afresh—a foolish idea, as there was no blood left in the body. Turchi, being asked if he could identify the corpse, said that he believed it to be that of Deodati, and the judges having met in council decided, after some debate, that there was not enough evidence to warrant the prisoner's being put to the torture in order to cross-examine him. So they went leisurely to work.

While matters were thus delayed, Giulio, who had reached Aix, thought of letting Turchi know of his arrival, and also of getting away some of

his clothes which were at the house of a courtesan, his friend. So he sent a letter announcing his arrival at Aix, and telling Turchi to say that he knew nothing whatever about Geronimo's death. If the corpse were found in his pavilion, he must declare that he firmly believed Giulio to be the murderer, and moreover that of this his flight gave manifest proof.

Having written the letter, he sent a peasant with it to Antwerp, instructing him how to find Turchi. On reaching Antwerp the peasant, who could not read, forgot Turchi's name, and when making inquiries for him mentioned Giulio, the Romagnole. As everybody in the town said that it was the Romagnole who had killed Deodati, a citizen overhearing the man took him before the criminal officer, with whom he was on intimate terms. Being questioned, the poor fellow produced Giulio's letter, which the magistrate read, and then re-examined Simone, ordering him to be put to the torture; but, without waiting for this, the wretch, though he had been bold enough to murder Geronimo, fell to weeping like a whipped child, and made abject confession of his guilt. When all the depositions had been

drawn up, which were subsequently ratified by the criminal, sentence was passed, to the effect that Turchi was to be burned publicly in the market-place of Antwerp before a slow fire.

On hearing the very cruel death that he was to die, the miserable man well-nigh lost his reason, and in his despair knew not how to make ready for that end which was now so near. Accordingly, a Franciscan friar was sent to him, an Italian, and a man of great benevolence and passing eloquent. With our Lord God's help, he exhorted him so fervently to repent that the unhappy man confessed himself with the utmost contrition, and prepared to suffer death with all possible patience. The holy friar besought him that when, at the stake, he should say to him, "Simone, now is the time of repentance," he should answer, "E'en so, father." This Turchi promised to do.

Upon the day appointed Simone was locked into the very chair in which Geronimo had been murdered, and, being placed on a cart, he was drawn through all the streets of Antwerp, accompanied by the good friar, who comforted him. On reaching the market-place the chair, with Simone locked therein, was set down, and the ministers

of justice proceeded to light a slow fire round about it, which they gradually fed with fagots when necessary, being careful not to let the flames become too fierce, so that for his greater torment the wretched Turchi might be slowly roasted. The friar, standing as close as the heat of the fire allowed, kept repeating, "Simone, now is the fruitful time of repentance," to which the wretched man, while his power of speech remained, would answer, "Ay, father, ay, father."

So far as one could judge by his gestures, the unhappy culprit showed the utmost patience and contrition, meeting his cruel and shameful death without a murmur. When they knew that he was dead, before the flames had totally disfigured it, they took his half-burnt body and carried it outside the city, where they chained it with iron chains to a high stake, girding to his belt the Pistoian dagger with which Deodati had been slain. They then set up the stake in the ground, in the middle of the main road, so that all might see how shameful had been the death of so cruel a murderer. I am fain to believe that as the wretched Simone repented of his sins and showed himself ready for death, since die he must, it

mattered little to him what sort of death were his, if only this had been without shame, as it is not the quality of the punishment, but the cause for this, which makes death abominable and ignominious. Virtue, in truth, can invest any sort of death with honour, whereas death, of whatever kind it be, may never avail to put on virtue any stain.

While the peasant bringing Giulio's letter was under arrest at the house of the magistrate, the justices of Antwerp sent a messenger to their colleagues at Aix, to claim the surrender of the perfidious Romagnole, so that severe punishment might be dealt out to him; but the Aix authorities refused to give him up. Nevertheless, not to allow such villainy to go unpunished, they caused Giulio to be seized, who confessed to the murder, and then his arms, thighs, legs, and ribs were broken on the wheel to which he was afterwards bound, dying thus after two days' agony.

In fine, from this tragic tale we may conclude that he who well considers the result of his deeds rarely does ill, while he who gives no thought to this dies, as he has lived, like a very beast of the field.

BIGOLINO, the Calabrian, plays a trick upon the Bishop of Reggio, his master, by means of a certain forged bill.

INTENDING to quit Naples and return here, I had to go to Reggio in Calabria, a very ancient city, from the sea-coast of which they say that Sicily was broken off by an earthquake, becoming an island, as now it is.* About this time in Reggio there was a Calabrian servant to the right reverend the bishop of the place, whose name was Bigolino, the merriest, most amusing fellow in all the country round about. With his voice he could imitate the braying of an ass, the neighing of horses, and the cries of this or that animal, while there were few birds whose voice and song he could not copy. As hardly a week passed but he was up to some funny prank or other, everybody in Reggio had a great liking for him, and he furnished plenty

* Cf. Virgil, Aen. III. 417-419.

of food for gossip. He had served divers masters in divers places, and had lately entered the said bishop's employ. Finding that he got nothing further for his service than his meat and drink, besides two suits of clothes a year, he determined to play his master a trick, and revealed his whole plan to a fellow-servant.

Accordingly one day he went to the stable, and mounting a colt that the bishop had lately brought away from the stud, a vicious, restive brute, he rode out of the city to where much ground had been dug up in order to drain certain fields that were often flooded. Then he drove the colt headlong into the mud and soft earth that the workmen had thrown up, and sticking spurs into his flanks made him play the very devil, till at last both horse and rider fell splash into the mire, not far from where the men were digging, who, running thither, began to cry "Help! help!" They found Bigolino soused in mire, and motionless, with blood running from his mouth, and thought that the horse had trampled on the poor wretch. So they picked him up out of the dirt, and, putting him on a litter, they carried him to the bishop's palace, to the general grief of all the

townsfolk, who dearly loved Bigolino, just because he was such a merry fellow. As they carried him along, every now and then he let a drop or two of blood fall from his mouth.

At the sad news, the bishop was sorely troubled, being very fond of Bigolino, so, after placing him in a chamber, he sent at once for a physician. Bigolino's accomplice stayed with him as if to nurse him, and, being at times left alone with him, he replenished the sponge filled with blood which the rogue concealed in his mouth in order to carry out the trick. When the physician came, he observed the blood and looked into the patient's face (which with certain scents he had managed to make as livid as that of a corpse), and, not being the most expert of men, he opined that the poor fellow had been trampled upon by the horse, and that there was not a whole bone left in his body. Indeed, he declared that Bigolino was in danger of death.

After a little while, however, he began to open his eyes and to draw breath, when they straightway summoned a priest to shrive him. But from Bigolino they got nothing but certain signs which he made as if to show that he was troubled

with the weight of his sins. The sowgelder* of a doctor had prescribed certain unguents, which Bigolino's companion said he had prepared, who, as night came on, professed himself ready to sit up with the patient. Soon after, my lord bishop came in to see Bigolino, saying to him the kindest and most affectionate things in the world, for, to tell the truth, he was mightily sorry to lose his jester. As the bishop was about to go, Bigolino motioned to him with his hands, as if he would say something. The bishop, stooping down tenderly to him, said, "Courage, my good Bigolino, courage, for God will help you. Is there aught that you would have of me?" The rogue nodded assent, and was pressed by his accomplice to say what he wanted, since my lord the bishop was ready to do anything. So the buffoon made many strange gestures until his confederate said, "Monsignore, it seems to me that the poor fellow wants his doublet." "What for, I wonder? Death follows close at his heels, now, I reckon."

So they fetched his doublet, and Bigolino, giving it to the bishop, motioned him to look at a certain

* *Castraporci*, meaning that he knew more about the ailments of pigs than human beings.

part of it to which he pointed. The bishop took it, and was about to rip it open at the place indicated, when Bigolino made signs for him to carry it away with him.

Being curious to see what this might be, Monsignore took the doublet to his chamber, and with a knife cut open the part which Bigolino had shown him. There he found a bank-bill, so perfectly forged as to seem like one issued by Spinelli's bank at Naples, by which bill the said bank pledged itself to pay the bearer, at sight, six hundred gold ducats, making it seem as if Bigolino had deposited this sum in the bank. Seeing the bill, my lord the bishop believed this might well be, and thought that Bigolino had probably saved up this money when in Naples, as the date of the paper agreed with that of his residence there. In fact, it seemed more than likely, as the bishop knew that Bigolino had received many presents from the Viceroy and the nobles, as well as many gold ducats, for all his pleasant tomfooleries. So he said to himself, "Of a truth, Bigolino is not such a fool, after all, as they make out; he has known how to look after himself mighty well." Though from the income of his bishopric, as also

from many other revenues, Monsignore was very wealthy, he was, nevertheless, extremely avaricious; so he persuaded himself that Bigolino had given him the bill so that the money should come to him. Accordingly, he put it carefully away.

In the meantime, when every one was abed, Bigolino took supper at his ease, his friend waiting upon him, and afterwards he slept until well past midnight. Then his companion brought a basin full of blood, and, having smeared the patient's face therewith, he poured it all over the bed, calling out loudly that Bigolino was about to die. In came the chaplain, primed with prayers and blessings such as they use for the dying, while others stood round the bed, to watch poor Bigolino writhing in his death agony. At last he lay still, and they all believed him to be dead, seeing the great quantity of blood which, apparently, he had vomited, and noting the ghastly pallor of his face. Then, bringing water, his trusty friend proceeded to wash the corpse, refusing help from any one. So at this work the two were left alone; and the patient, after being washed, was duly wrapped in a shroud.

It was now close upon daybreak; and Monsig-

nore, hearing the sad news, was sorry to have lost Bigolino, but yet delighted to have got his six hundred ducats. Soon the confederate came in, saying, "Monsignore, I have laid out my poor friend, who is so disfigured by the horse's kicks as to be hardly recognisable. Indeed, from inward rottenness he stinks already, so I have wrapped him in a sheet. It would be well if the burial could soon take place." And the bishop answered, "I wish every honour to be shown him, and all the priests and friars of the city shall be bidden to the funeral." Then, giving orders to a servant at hand, he arranged that the ceremony should cost over thirty ducats.

In order that no one might go near to touch Bigolino, the accomplice had wrapped a piece of carrion in the shroud, and this stank horribly. Shortly before dinner-time all the people and the clergy arrived to go with Bigolino to his grave, everybody greatly mourning his loss. Having been placed on the bier, the body was borne in procession through the city, and then brought back to the bishop's palace, as it was to be buried in the cathedral. Most solemn was this ceremony, my lord bishop himself chanting the mass for the

dead. Yet the stench was such that no one ventured too near the coffin, in which Bigolino was like to explode with laughter as he waited for the end of the whole comedy.

The mass being over, when the office for the dead had been chanted, the gravediggers carried the coffin to the tomb, from which the stone had already been removed. One of the men noticed that the cloth which covered Bigolino's face moved slightly, so he said to his mate, "Comrade, don't you see that this fellow is not dead? Look how his breath moves the sheet." But the other gravedigger, though he saw well enough that the sheet stirred every now and then, replied, "Hold your tongue, you stupid fool, and don't talk rubbish. The money for this has already been expended, and the fellow 's broken all his bones in such a way that he can't be alive. Leave it to me and pitch him in; see, you catch hold of his heels, and I'll take his head. Pah! can't you smell how he stinks! Now for it!"

At this, Bigolino said to himself, "'Swounds! but the mongrels are in earnest while I am in sport. But they will soon find out their mistake." And just as one was saying to the other, "You

take his heels while I take his head," our bonny Bigolino, freeing himself from the winding-sheet, calls out, "You won't get me yet awhile!" and, giving the shroud a violent jerk, he jumps out of the coffin, howling, and making the most fearful and hideous noises in the world. This put all the people to flight; priests and friars scampered off helter-skelter, dropping their crosses as they ran.

When he saw that all had taken to their heels, while the panic-stricken females screamed aloud for mercy, he wrapped his winding-sheet about him, and, picking up one of the crosses, began to imitate the Donkey's Chant,* and to chase the fugitives, some of whom, having recovered from their fright, now saw that it was one of Bigolino's usual pranks, and the whole thing ended in laughter. Monsignore was not so glad to have got back his buffoon alive as he was sorry for all the expense to which he had been put. And when Bigolino, still wrapped in the sheet and followed by a crowd, came up, the prelate cried, "Ah! you've played me a nice game, a fine trick, in very truth, mad fool that you are!" "Oh,

* *Fare il verso di messer l'asino*, which probably means that he burlesqued the bishop's intoning.

most reverend sir," quoth Bigolino, "pardon me, but you don't quite understand. I wanted to let the tapers burn for me now, as when I really am dead perhaps there will be no one to light a candle for the peace of my soul, as everybody cannot read bankers' bills." Then, after some more pretty fooling, he said, "Monsignore, let's go and dine, as I am sinking for want of food." All that day he walked about the city wrapped in his sheet, to the exceeding merriment of everybody. Moreover, my lord bishop had to pay for all the expense incurred, knowing the bill to be forged.

GALEAZZO carries off a damsel from Padua, and then through jealousy kills both her and himself.

AT the time of that wise yet ill-starred prince Lodovico Sforza, there lived in a city of this duchy* a merchant of great wealth and great credit among his peers, who had taken to wife a young gentlewoman, well-mannered and sweet of temper, by whom he had one only child, a son. The boy had not reached the age of ten when his father died, leaving him in his mother's charge as heir to all the property. Being desirous that her son should keep close to the noble traditions of her ancestors, the mother would not have him put his hand to trade, but she brought him up most carefully in the study of letters and in those other exercises that go to the making of a thorough gentleman, while doing all she could meanwhile to complete her

* The duchy of Milan.

husband's outstanding negotiations with various houses of business in Flanders, Italy, France, Spain, and even in Syria, her intention being to buy property for her son, whose name was Galeazzo.

He grew up to be a gallant youth, courteous and full of spirit, with a taste not only for letters, but for music, riding, wrestling, tilting, and the like. This greatly delighted his mother, and she provided him most liberally with clothes, money, and horses, letting him want for nothing that should please him. In a few years she had paid off all her husband's debts, and had recovered such moneys as were due to him from other merchants, with the exception of one account against a Venetian gentleman who traded in Syria, and, at the time when Galeazzo was about sixteen or seventeen years old, had returned to Venice.

Being wishful, as lads are, to see new countries, and particularly the famous and honoured city of Venice, he begged his mother to let him go thither. She, so far from being displeased at his wish, encouraged him to go, desiring him to settle the account still open with the Venetian gentleman aforesaid. So she sent him with her

bailiff, a man of experience, commending him, moreover, to the care of one of the merchants in Venice who was a great friend of the family. Galeazzo accordingly set out, most properly equipped with clothes and servants.

On reaching Venice, he presented himself to his father's friend, who gladly welcomed him. They then went together to see the Venetian gentleman, who, on learning who Galeazzo was, and the cause of his coming, said, "My dear son, be welcome. It is true that, on working out my accounts, I find I am your debtor to the amount you state, and as calculated by your man of business. If I have not sooner settled this debt, at least by letters, it is because I only arrived here three days ago with the galleys from Syria. Now I am ready to satisfy you, but you will have to wait about eight or ten days, until I can go to Padua, where I have my wife and all my family." Galeazzo said that he was quite willing to wait, and would spend the time in seeing all the sights of Venice, which he did. Then they went to Padua together, and there was nothing for it but Galeazzo must lodge with the Venetian, to whose house he accord-

ingly went, taking only a page as escort, the other serving-folk being sent to an inn. Having himself been an honoured guest of the young man's father, the Venetian sought to entertain Galeazzo to the very best of his power.

He had a daughter, fifteen years old, and passing fair. Galeazzo, who saw the girl constantly every day, and who had never yet known what sort of thing love was, grew deeply enamoured of her. As the lad pleased her, she did not avoid love's dart, but, aware of his passion, returned it a thousandfold; and matters reached such a pass, that they soon managed to make the following plan: Her father was to pay over all the money to Galeazzo within three days and then return with him to Venice, where he had to stay for a while. Two days after his departure, the damsel was to flee from home, in charge of Galeazzo's trusted servant, whom he pretended he was sending to his mother. In fact, the Venetian had despatched letters to her by him, but the good servant remained in hiding at Padua until the time fixed for flight.

Having got the money, Galeazzo went back with his host to Venice, and, acting on his advice,

had the whole sum remitted to Milan by bills of exchange. In fact, he did nothing, and bought nothing, without first consulting him. All at once, the Venetian gets news of his daughter's flight from Padua, and of their being unable to find any trace of her whereabouts. Grieved beyond measure, the good man determined to leave everything and return to Padua. Feigning to share in his sorrow at such misfortune, Galeazzo offered to go with him, and indeed to accompany him wherever he wished. The Venetian thanked him for his offer, and departed; but, hearing nothing of Lucrezia, his missing daughter, he came back to Venice to find Galeazzo still there. Soon afterwards, the young man returned to his home in Lombardy, never daring to say a word to his mother about the girl that he had carried off.

The servant had, meantime, hired a suitable house, furnishing this as his master had instructed him, Galeazzo's nurse and her husband being put there as guardians to the girl. And here, to the marvellous pleasure of both concerned, Galeazzo culled of his Lucrezia the virgin flower and fruit. More did he love her than his very life, passing almost every night in her com-

pany, and spending large sums to procure her enjoyment.

Though Galeazzo's mother knew that he often supped and slept away from home, she said nothing, and for nearly three years the lovers led as joyous and merry a life as well might be. Then it so chanced that the mother thought of finding a wife for her son, but to this proposal he would never consent. She suspected that he was probably enamoured of some other fair one, or that perhaps he had taken a wife after his own fashion; therefore she surrounded him with so many spies, that she soon got to know of all that he had done at Padua. The news greatly annoyed her; and one evening, when Galeazzo was supping with his cousin, she contrived to have Lucrezia carried off by three masked men, and placed in a nunnery that very night. Having finished supper, Galeazzo was for going to sleep with his mistress, when the nurse and her husband told him, between their sobs, that Lucrezia had been gagged by three masked men, who had carried her off. He was like to die of grief at the news, and all night long he wept bitterly.

Early in the morning he went to his mother's

house, and locked himself up in his room, remaining all day without food. During that time his mother made no inquiry as to her son, but on the following day, seeing that he would not dine, she went to him in his chamber, when he begged her to leave him alone in peace. She asked to know the cause for his grief, but he only answered her with sighs and tears. Thereupon, being touched to pity, she spoke as follows: "Dear son of mine, I could never have believed that you would hide aught from me in this world, but thought that you would have shown me all your troubles. However, I find myself much mistaken. Yet, thanks to my watchfulness, I have found out the cause of your sorrow. I know that you love Lucrezia, whom you carried off from her father's house in Padua. If that was a gallant deed, I leave you to consider, but the time has now come for help, not for punishment. Take heart of grace, and see to it that you recover your health and well-being. Lucrezia shall be yours again. I had her lodged in a monastery, thinking that if you found her not you would please me by taking a wife, as you ought to do."

Hearing this, Galeazzo seemed to be called back

from death to life, and with shame he confessed to his mother that he loved Lucrezia far more than his own life, beseeching her to let the girl be brought to him forthwith. She urged him to have patience just for that day, and sought to revive him with food and drink, promising to fetch the girl to him on the morrow.

What shall we say? At this simple promise, Galeazzo, who but now was like to die, having lost sleep and appetite through grief, became wholly comforted. He dined; and, when evening came, took supper, while the hope of regaining his Lucrezia gave him a calm restful night.

No sooner had he risen next day than he besought his mother to send for Lucrezia, so, to please her son, she drove in a little cart to the monastery and brought the girl away with her. When the two lovers met, they flung their arms about each other's necks, and in a close embrace shed hot salt tears for very joy. After countless kisses and endearments, Galeazzo, still weeping, asked Lucrezia, "Say, sweetheart, how did you do without me? What sort of life was yours? Did it not grieve you sore never to see me all this while? In truth, I thought I should die,

nor can I rightly tell why still I live. Ah! life of my life, who shall assure me that others, in this time of your absence from me, have not enjoyed your beauty? Jealousy is like to kill me, and my very heart is broken within my body. As then, O heart of mine, we may but die once, and escape this dire trouble, it is far better that we die together, and end all these our doubts at a single blow." So saying, he took a dagger from his belt, and stabbed the girl to the heart, so that she straightway fell down dead. Then he turned the bloody steel against himself, and, plunging it into his breast, sank down at Lucrezia's side.

Great was the noise of weeping in that house, and the hapless mother's desperate lamentations rent the sky. All that day Galeazzo lingered; and, when the sun went down, he died. Deaf to all comfortings, the mother passionately bewailed her dear dead son; indeed, she merited great pity and compassion, for her story might e'en draw tears from stones, to say nothing of you, gentle, tender-hearted ladies, whose beauteous eyes, as I see, are filled with tears. To keep matters hidden, the lovers were buried secretly, it being

given out that they had died of the plague, for at that time there was some suspicion of that disease in Milan, and, moreover, the doctors took bribes to declare this to be so. Yet they could not conceal the facts so closely but that in time they were completely known. Who, then, shall deny that jealousy is a noisome reptile which blinds men's eyes, if in sooth this of Galeazzo's was jealousy, and not rather madness and fury?

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